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)*

Teesside University (TU) is a post-92 institution with a growing research presence. Our vision is to be a "leading University with an international reputation for academic excellence that provides an outstanding student and learning experience underpinned by research, enterprise and the professions". We have 77 staff on research-only contracts including research assistants, associates and fellows. We also include our 645 teaching and research academics and 575 postgraduate researchers in our target audience for the Researcher Development Concordat. Our ECR population, using the REF 2021 definition and at the census date of 31 July 2020, was 26%. However, we use a broad and inclusive definition of ECR which means our population in practice is larger, though difficult to quantify. For example, due to having many large, vocational programmes (e.g. nursing, education) we have a significant number of academics with a professional background and significant teaching experience, but who are new to academic research and therefore 'early career' in terms of their research.

The University's research themes and centres are embedded across five academic schools. Each school has appointed academic leads for research culture, PGR and ECR experience, and mentoring. These leads work within the schools and research centres, supported by colleagues from central departments, contributing to embedding a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researcher at all career stages.

The University has maintained its HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award since 2013 and most recently renewed its award in 2023/24. Responsibility for the HREiR action plan and implementation sits with the Research Culture and People Sub-Committee (RCPSC), chaired by a member of the professoriate, and deputy chair is Director of the Research and Enterprise Office (REO). Membership includes academic leads for research culture from each of the schools, chairs of the ECR and PGR fora, and staff from relevant professional departments supporting the implementation, including HR, the library, careers service, and REO.

RCPSC meets four times a year and reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), which is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange. The ECR Forum and PGR Forum are also
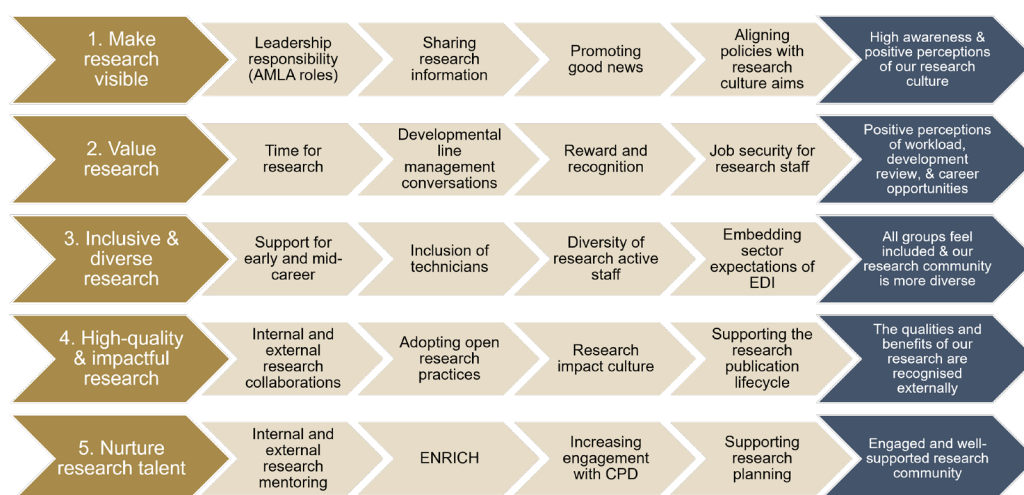
directly represented on RKEC and able to voice issues to this senior committee independently. As well as being formally constituted sub-committees, these researcher fora provide informal networking and peer support to the research community, through regular meetings, events and activities.

Following our external review of HREiR in 2023/24, we have established a new evaluation working group (a sub-group of the RCPSC) to ensure a continuous and robust evaluation of our research culture, with specific attention to the impacts on research staff and early career researchers among our academic staff population.

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)*

In 2023/24, the University launched its *Research Culture Action Plan 2023-2026*, which is the foundation of our HREiR and Researcher Development Concordat action plan. The three principles of the Concordat run through our five research culture aims, which are to: 1. Make research visible, 2. Value research, 3. Ensure inclusive and diverse research, 4. Support high-quality and impactful research, 5. Nurture research talent.

Summary of aims, actions and measures of success

Aim					Measure of success
1. Make research visible	Leadership responsibility (AMLA roles)	Sharing research information	Promoting good news	Aligning policies with research culture aims	High awareness & positive perceptions of our research culture
2. Value research	Time for research	Developmental line management conversations	Reward and recognition	Job security for research staff	Positive perceptions of workload, development review, & career opportunities
3. Inclusive & diverse research	Support for early and mid-career	Inclusion of technicians	Diversity of research active staff	Embedding sector expectations of EDI	All groups feel included & our research community is more diverse
4. High-quality & impactful research	Internal and external research collaborations	Adopting open research practices	Research impact culture	Supporting the research publication lifecycle	The qualities and benefits of our research are recognised externally
5. Nurture research talent	Internal and external research mentoring	ENRICH	Increasing engagement with CPD	Supporting research planning	Engaged and well-supported research community

Our detailed implementation and evaluation plans include the following:

Environment and culture

- Disseminating research good news, identifying, and embedding good practice in information sharing (1.3, 1.4, 1.6).
- Ensuring research-related policies support our research culture aims (1.5).
- Supporting early and mid-career researcher communities for peer support, representation, and guidance (3.2, 3.3, 3.5).
- Monitoring and making recommendations on equality, research culture, and research integrity aspects of REF 2029 (3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.6).

Employment

- Ensuring all researchers have supportive developmental annual review conversations (2.2).
- Ensuring academic promotion criteria, and other opportunities for reward and recognition for research, support our research culture and align with good practice, such as DORA and CoARA (2.3, 2.4, 2.5).
- Exploring alternative models for more sustainable employment of fixed-term contract researchers (2.6).

Professional Development of Researchers

- Making recommendations to improve experiences of 'time for research' (2.1).
- Embedding good practice in developing support for research collaborations, impact, and methods (4.2, 4.4, 4.8).
- Continuing to develop the annual research sabbatical, internal and external mentoring schemes (4.7, 5.1, 5.6).
- Making recommendations to address (if any) barriers to engaging with continuing professional development (5.3).
- Holding an annual research week to showcase, celebrate and support research and researchers (5.7).

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]

The following reporting period covers year one of our Research Culture Action Plan 2023-2026, which encompasses our HREiR and Researcher Development Concordat action plans. Many actions are ongoing, and the full impacts have not yet been realised. Actions are intended to build to larger impacts over the three years leading up to our next external HREiR review in November 2026.

Environment and Culture *(max 600 words)*	Institution • An evaluation strategy and terms of reference have been drafted to support a new evaluation working group, which will feed into the Research Culture and People Sub-Committee and ensure a continuous and robust evaluation of our research culture, with specific attention to the impacts on research staff and early career researchers among our academic staff population (1.2 / ECI6). • A new 'Research and Enterprise Hub' has been created on the University intranet to act as a central research portal, providing a key internal resource for research-related information. Initial feedback on the hub is being gathered through the ECR Forum and links to school research information and webpages is being explored through the RCPSC (1.6 / ECI1). Academic Managers of Researchers • Senior academics and managers of researchers were engaged through a 'fishbowl' event exploring some of the barriers to open access and how culture is influenced by managers and supervisors. A special edition of the research community monthly newsletter also focused on open access and collaborative activities are planned with the other northeast institutions in 2025 (4.3 / ECM5). Researchers • An away day has been planned for November 2024, which will bring together senior academics with leadership responsibilities across a range of research-related areas, including research culture, PGR and

	ECR experience, and mentoring. This away day responds to the recommendations from a piece of consultancy commissioned to understand the impact of these academic leadership roles and how they could better support a positive research culture. The outcomes will be a new set of 'role descriptors' to provide clarity and equity across roles, and the framework for a 'hub' to support leads in their roles (1.1 / ECR1). • A working definition of 'mid-career' researcher has been developed and consulted on through a survey and focus groups. An MCR-led project group has been formed to take forward ideas such as a new self-identification career tool and peer support group for MCRs (3.2 / ECR5). • The visibility of the ECR Forum to research-only staff has been improved. At the first meeting of the year, 50% of registrations were from research-only staff. The inclusivity of this group for research-only staff, as well as early career researchers on academic contracts, will remain a priority (3.3 / ECR5).
Employment *(max 600 words)*	Institution • A new online system has been launched to record and manage the annual Professional Development Planning and Review (PDPR) process. This new system will lead to access to new data and insights on how PDPRs are conducted in relation to research, to ensure all researchers experience supportive developmental PDPR conversations (2.2 / EI5). • An initial analysis of the representation of research in the University's annual Star Awards has been conducted. This analysis will lead to the generation of more specific questions for interrogation and recommendations of how to increase the visibility and inclusion of research and researchers in the awards (2.5 / EI3).

	• A new induction resource for new researchers and academics has been created and hosted on the Research and Enterprise Hub. The resource will ensure researchers and academics who join the University in between the twice-yearly induction webinars will have the key information immediately available. This is highlighted to all new starters in their welcome email (3.4 / EI2).
Professional development *(max 600 words)*	Institution • A paper has been drafted and shared with Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge exchange to consider the opportunities to enhance transparency around the time available for research and the processes for requesting and being given 'significant responsibility for research' (2.1 / PCDI1). • The TU researcher development programme has been relaunched as 'ENRICH' and is growing in visibility and recognition across the University. New marketing collateral has been created to create recognisable presence for ENRICH. A new booking system is in operation and a project is underway to ensure relevant data such as attendance and feedback is recorded effectively (5.5 / PCDI1). • Preparations for the annual research week are underway. A draft programme has been shared with Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge exchange and a 'save the date' is planned for the end of November 2024. Research week 2025 will take place in May/June and provides an opportunity to showcase, celebrate and support research and researchers (5.7 / PCDI1). Academic Managers of Researchers • The annual research sabbatical scheme is ongoing, and a new information session was held in December 2023 to raise awareness and increase applications.

| | The current call for sabbaticals taking place from January 2026 closes on 31 January 2025 (4.7 / PDCM4).

Researchers

- A research mentoring scheme is in its second year of piloting and development. In the first year, 18 mentees were matched to 7 mentors in the School of Health and Life Sciences, with a focus on mentees who were 'new to research' (typically academics who come from a practice background, either not holding a PhD, or not having established themselves as a researcher). In September 2024, an information session was held to consolidate the second phase of the pilot, by expanding across multiple schools, with a new focus on early career researchers (5.1 / PCDR5). |
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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)*

A strength of our approach to implementing the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers has been the alignment of this initiative with our HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award action planning and reporting and our research culture ambitions through a single comprehensive action plan. However, the risk of this approach is that multiple stakeholder groups have different needs from these initiatives and the benefits of actions may not fall equally. To mitigate this, our new evaluation working group has a mandate to ensure our evaluation approaches enable us to disaggregate the impacts on our key audiences: research-only staff, early career researchers with an academic contract, mid-career researchers with an academic contract, and postgraduate researchers. Further, the RCPSC recognises that due to the HREiR and RD Concordat focus on staff, our postgraduate researchers have not yet benefitted as much from our research culture activities. Therefore, the committee has added a new standing item on postgraduate researchers to its agenda for future meetings. The chair of RCPSC has also recently taken up the newly created role of Director of the Postgraduate

Research School, which will support synergies between the aims of the committee and benefits for postgraduate researchers' experiences of our research culture.

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

By the end of November 2025, we will have achieved the following:

- Embedded our evaluation strategy and conducted initial evaluations against our measures of success, for example through a research community survey, feedback from specific activities, and focus groups or interviews to gather input from specific stakeholder groups.
- Further developed the Research and Enterprise Hub to include links to school-specific information, induction resources tailored for different audiences, and specific resources for ECRs and research staff.
- Reviewed a selection of our research-related policies to ensure they meet our research culture aims, and implemented new ways of making the policies accessible to researchers.
- Better understood researcher experiences of the PDPR process and how research objectives are embedded in PDPR.
- Established new resources and/or peer community to support the career development of our mid-career researchers.
- Developed pre-publication guidance and support to help ECRs to strengthen their research outputs, including support for research integrity and open access.
- Transitioned the research mentoring pilot scheme to being embedded as a 'business as usual' source of ongoing support for researchers, including mechanisms for onboarding new starters.
- Held and evaluated the impact of our annual research week in May/June 2025.

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 by the Research Culture and Policy Lead for review and approval by the Research Culture and People Sub-Committee (RCPSC) at their meeting in November 2024. The RCPSC put the report forward to the December

2024 meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) for approval and sign off by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange as Chair of RKEC. The report was then put forward for final sign off by the Vice Chancellor as Chair of the Academic Board.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Paul Croney

Contact for queries: Dr Katie Wheat, Research Culture and Policy Lead, k.wheat@tees.ac.uk / research@tees.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