

Heriot-Watt University: Concordat Progress 2024-25

- **Stakeholder:** **In** = Institution; **AM** = Academic Managers of Researchers; **R** = Researchers
- **HWU Enterprising Research Culture Strategic Objectives:** **SO1**=Research Integrity; **SO2**= Collegiality; **SO3** =Research Recognition; **SO4** = Research Careers; **SO5** = Open Research.

HW Concordat Implementation Plan	Actions Taken	Stakeholders			HW Research Culture Strategic Objective
		In	AM	R	
Environment and Culture					
1. Improve communication and awareness of Concordat principles	<p>The Concordat principles are embedded within the new Research Engagement Directorate (RED) SharePoint to improve awareness. A communication strategy, led by the Communications Team, ensures appropriate and routine dissemination of information.</p> <p>Communication and awareness of the Concordat principles is supported through the PGR University Induction activity and as standard through researcher community events.</p> <p>In June 2025, HWU launched its Research Culture Manifesto at the Principals’ Research Impact and Engagement (PRIME) Awards. Since then, it has been promoted to the research community, asking them to sign and pledge to actively support Concordat principles and a positive, inclusive and enterprising research culture. Signatories are committed to organising, participating in, or attending research-related initiatives wherever possible, and committing to having a discussion as part of their annual PDR conversation, or their annual PhD progress review, on how they can actively support and engage with fostering a positive, inclusive and enterprising research culture over each year.</p> <p>In February 2025, the Research Culture Enhancement Fund was launched to support researchers, academics, technical and professional services colleagues and PGR students. In its pilot phase, running between February and July 2025, the fund awarded support to 27 projects. Active promotion of the fund to all Schools and researchers at all career stages,</p>	•	•	•	SO2

	ensured increased awareness of Concordat principles [SM1] .				
2. Excellence in people/team management through transparency of responsibilities, relevant training, monitoring of practices	<p>Our Professional and Organisation Development (POD) activity continues to support a culture of leadership excellence providing people managers with tools and skills to be able to manage their people well.</p> <p>New offerings have been added to the POD calendar such as ‘Conversations that Matter’ and ‘An Introduction to Coaching for Managers’. Others are being added and considered for 2026, alongside our existing management and leadership programmes: ‘Stepping into Management’, ‘Digital Leaders Programme’ and ‘Global Leaders Programme’. This will be further strengthened by a pilot programme specifically supporting those leaders with people leadership responsibilities. We are developing better ways to support managers with managing local induction.</p> <p>Coaching is available to all colleagues at all levels and a mentoring scheme for people managers is in place. Additional mentors have recently been recruited and the opportunity to be mentored will be offered across 2026.</p> <p>We are designing, delivering and embedding initiatives that go beyond traditional professional learning and appraisal processes. Alongside expanding access to resources such as the ‘Role of People Manager’ toolkit and promoting the updated PDR workflow, we are introducing innovative approaches to people development that encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and community [SM2].</p> <p>PGR Supervisor training was thoroughly revised in 2024/25 with input from the Directors of PGR studies. The new programme consists of two parts: 1) online course focusing on the key principles of the PGR supervisory role as outlined in the HWU PGR Code of practice; 2) themed reflective practice sessions where good practice and poor practice examples are being shared. One of the reflective sessions focused on supporting the PGRs with their professional and career development. In addition, the PGR Community of Practice Teams group was established to encourage experience sharing between the supervisors.</p>	•	•	•	SO2/SO4

	<p>Scotland-wide UKCGE PGR Supervisor writing was promoted to the aspiring and PGR supervisors as well as professional services staff who support PGRs. Three HWU academics received the Recognised Supervisor status.</p> <p>PI Network sessions organised by the Prosper team (University of Liverpool) were promoted to the managers of researchers through a dedicated Sharepoint page [SM2].</p>				
3. Ensure researchers at all careers stages, are represented	<p>Our Enterprising Research Culture Evaluation Report produced in July 2025, was grounded in a participatory and iterative approach, the evaluation drawing on qualitative and quantitative data gathered across multiple initiatives and with input from a wide range of researchers at all career stages.</p> <p>Wide representation on the Research Culture Working Group (RC WG) and Task and Finish Groups, enabled ECRs to co-create the RC Action Plan and contribute to its implementation. We have rolling open opportunities for researchers at all career stages to be involved in selection and judging panels for researcher development opportunities.</p> <p>This year, 18 Postgraduate Research students participated in our Three Minute Thesis competition (3MT), representing a diverse range of disciplines and research areas. For the first time, finalists were drawn from all five Heriot-Watt campuses, reflecting the truly international nature of our research community. Now in its fourth year, 3MT remains a cornerstone of researcher development, challenging participants to communicate complex research clearly and engagingly to a non-specialist audience. Its growth and inclusivity demonstrate Heriot-Watt's commitment to supporting research excellence at every career stage.</p> <p>The Research Staff Forum, following scoping, has been replaced with an Academic Reference Group, which has a wider membership and acts as a consulting body for the Research Futures Hub [SM3].</p>	•			SO2
4. Foster a supportive research community by enhancing	A wide variety of networking and support activity for all career stages took place during 2024/25. This included 33 Research Culture Café sessions, Nature Masterclasses, panel	•		•	SO2

<p>networking opportunities, promoting EDI best practices and ensuring clear access to HR policies on bullying, harassment, and workload management</p>	<p>discussions in job security, Narrative CV workshops, Research Integrity, ethics, Open Research and dedicated writing sessions and FIKA coffee for networking.</p> <p>The Research Culture Enhancement Fund running across 2025 supported a variety of networking opportunities for the research community including writing retreats, neurodiversity workshops, research away days, and interdisciplinary networking events. The fund actively promoted EDI best practice and feedback across the pilot phase showed increased engagement and positive outcomes.</p> <p>Reflecting on the success and challenges of the pilot phase, changes were made and the fund re-launched in October 2025, moving to a light-touch rolling fund, to provide more rapid support for those leading work across Schools.</p> <p>Existing active networks (LGBTQ+, Disability, Parents & Carers, STEM Inclusivity) were consulted as part of the refresh of the Grievance (including bully & harassment) Policy & Guidance. Work is currently underway to set up a new Ethnic Diversity staff network.</p> <p>Assistant Executive Deans for EDI have been appointed in three Schools: Engineering and Physical Sciences; Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure; Society and Social Sciences. Recruitment is underway in the School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences. The Research Culture Action Plan and its recommendations have been taken into consideration in the development of actions for recent/upcoming School-level and institutional Athena Swan submissions.</p> <p>Collaboration with HR through the Research Culture Working Group has provided a tool to strengthen policies and mechanisms that address toxic behaviours, fostering inclusion and support across the research community [SM4].</p>				
<p>5. Develop better understanding of research staff population from improved data</p>	<p>The ERP system used at HWU is enhancing employee databases to provide improved reporting on research staff. This will aid monitoring, planning, and support. Our detailed Worktribe analyses provide ongoing insights into research activity and diversity, and data is interrogated at rolling quarterly School Strategy meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			<p>SO1/SO3</p>

	<p>A major step to improve clarity and analysis, is the work underway to create a new research dashboard; consultation with Associate Executive Deans across all Schools was completed and a first iteration is scheduled for December 2025.</p> <p>The creation of this dashboard builds on the recommendation from the Research Culture Working Group for transparent research metrics, regular reviews, and live dashboards for clarity, ensuring adaptive, resource-efficient methodologies across disciplines, career stages, and employment contexts [SM5].</p>				
6. Establish an Open Research framework	<p>The University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI) approved the formation of a formal sub-Committee in Open Research to act on behalf of UCRI to establish an Open Research framework. An Open Research Steering Group (ORSG) was established with Terms of Reference drafted in March 2025.</p> <p>A university-wide call was issued, with a self-nomination process and with Open Research related questions issued. Applications were reviewed by the Chair of ORSG, Head of Policy Strategy and Impact, Head of Research & Business Intelligence and Research Support Librarian, with a first meeting in August 2025, and a six-weekly meeting schedule established [SM6].</p>	•			SO2/SO5
Employment					
7. Develop a common understanding of the promotion process and career pathways at the University	<p>HWU's academic career pathways modernisation was supported by UCU, and the level descriptors and guidance were published in November 2024 and were successfully used for the 2025 Academic Promotion Round. Reward Team sessions continue to support promotion and reward transparency.</p> <p>The first stage of the Professorial Zoning Project was completed in July 2025. The Group developed full characteristics/criteria for leadership for each of the academic career pathways across four zones. This was positively received and approved by the University Executive, but their recommendation was not to fully implement Zoning at the current time. However, the Zoning Criteria are a useful tool to support recruitment at this level and work has commenced looking at how the Criteria can be used to proactively support the vision of Performance Leadership which is critical to the success and delivery of the</p>	•		•	SO3/SO4

	<p>university’s ambitions as we work towards Strategy 2035. The Criteria can be used by managers and individuals to facilitate the PDR process, to inform academic leadership development plans and for talent management and careers development [SM7].</p> <p>Six Academic Promotion Workshops were held in November 2024, four in person and two online, providing staff with the opportunity to learn about the Promotions process and ask questions. These workshops were led by the Vice-Principal and attended by 218 staff members. One session had BSL interpreters and one online session was recorded and had BSL superimposed to allow all staff equal access to the information. Progress will be tracked through PDRs and case studies, supporting applicant development and a clearer, structured promotion process across the University [SM8].</p>				
8. Enhance the induction process across the University	<p>We deliver quarterly ‘Belong – Welcome to Heriot-Watt’ for UK new starters, run “How to Effectively Induct New Colleagues” sessions for managers, and pre-joiner and joiner checklists are available for managers to use as templates to structure local inductions. Managers and new joiners receive tasks to complete via our Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) interface ensuring compliance training on diversity, governance, and safety.</p> <p>Work is ongoing around improving the SharePoint area and content, and to develop enhanced guidance and support tools for managers to streamline existing processes.</p> <p>The University PGR Induction was revised, moving away from an online-only event to an in-person event for PGRs based in Edinburgh and Galashiels campuses with an online option for those based in Orkney, Dubai and Malaysia campuses or those registered as off-campus [SM9].</p>	•	•		SO2/SO4
9. Embed culture of valuing recognising and celebrating a range of different	<p>In October 2024, the Research Engagement Directorate (RED) hosted the inaugural Research in Action Week across the Edinburgh Campus, coinciding with Open Research Week. The event attracted approximately 250 participants from across the university, marking a significant step in fostering collaboration and showcasing research excellence.</p> <p>The week featured a diverse programme, including:</p>			•	SO2/SO3

<p>types of research success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-led exhibitions highlighting groundbreaking research and state-of-the-art facilities. • Dedicated sessions on projects from Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) and the Postdoctoral community. • Tours, demonstrations, and a panel discussion with representatives from three Global Research Institutes. • A Narrative CV workshop delivered by the Enterprising Research Culture team. • Networking events facilitated by various RED teams. <p>Feedback from both exhibitors and attendees was overwhelmingly positive, reinforcing the value of this initiative in strengthening research culture and engagement. Building on this success, Research in Action Week will return in October 2025, with plans to broaden participation and inclusivity across all schools and campuses.</p> <p>In March 2025, Heriot-Watt University co-hosted Research Integrity and Culture Week in partnership with the University of Strathclyde, and with additional support from the University of Dundee and Queen Margaret University. The event brought together institutions across Scotland to promote best practices in research integrity and foster a positive research culture.</p> <p>Heriot-Watt contributed significantly to the programme by delivering sessions on Public Engagement, Research Impact, Mentoring, and Ethics, as well as co-hosting events focused on Narrative CVs. A highlight of the week was Heriot-Watt’s facilitation of a sector-wide World Café event, which provided an interactive forum for discussing research culture challenges. This session featured expert speakers from Heriot-Watt, Dundee, and Strathclyde universities, encouraging collaborative dialogue and knowledge exchange.</p> <p>The success and strong sector-wide engagement with the 2025 event have led to plans for an expanded initiative in 2026. The upcoming event will be coordinated as a sector-wide programme under the leadership of Frances Medaney, Scottish Research Culture Collaboration Manager, ensuring continued collaboration and impact across the Scottish research community [SM10].</p>				
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10. Ensure that time for research and collaboration is created and applied consistently across the university following workload model principles	<p>Whilst a range of activity is currently taking place across Schools, the recruitment of Research Culture Coordinators has been paused due to financial restraints with a goal to phase in recruitment from 2026. These roles will ensure alignment between School strategies and the Research Culture Action Plan, and the establishment of supportive structures, particularly around timely coordination of activities, and collecting evidence and feedback [SM11].</p> <p>In August 2024, a network of 17 Research Culture champions was established. They met four times in 2024/25 and are working to foster collaboration, share best practice, inspire colleagues and embed Research Culture initiatives across all campuses [SM12].</p>	•			SO4
11. Provide training workshops to support researchers	A dedicated career development series has been established for PGRs and research staff, utilising 'Prosper' resources to address diverse career pathways and skill enhancement. This initiative forms part of the Research Futures Hub's (RFH) mission to foster professional growth and networking opportunities for Early Career Researchers. Continued expansion of the RFH programme, and promotion of its work, has taken place across 2024/25 [SM13] .	•			SO2/SO4
Professional Development of Researchers					
12. Establish a Research Futures Hub to enhance career development, support the PGR lifecycle, and provide networking opportunities for ECRs	<p>The process to introduce the Research Futures Hub (Graduate School) is ongoing and across 2024/25 our new Professional Researcher Training Framework was launched and developed. It is providing a pathway-based approach to enhance researchers' skills in research, business, and policy.</p> <p>The framework features the 'Researcher Accelerator' pathway for newcomers and four optional pathways: 'Investigate,' 'Communicate,' 'Apply,' and 'Lead.' It encourages researchers to take ownership of their development, with flexible access to online resources. The framework integrates guided pathways, self-driven learning, networking opportunities, and live sessions through Research Culture Conversations, fostering</p>	•	•	•	SO2/SO3/SO4

	<p>community building and peer-led initiatives. We see steady engagement and positive feedback from users and will build on this in the coming year.</p> <p>A dedicated Research Engagement Directorate (RED) SharePoint site was established in 2024 and continues to be updated. It offers extensive resources and guidance for researchers. It provides a pathway approach, guiding users through funding proposals, applications, and post-award processes.</p> <p>The site includes sections on skills development, stakeholder engagement, research culture and achieving research impact, with tools for planning, collaboration, and evaluation, including the research culture enhancement fund, which is open to ECRs and is designed to support networking amongst other research culture activities.</p> <p>The platform also highlights events, workshops, activities, and development opportunities to support researchers at all career stages (SM14).</p>				
<p>13. Establish a Mid-senior career development programme</p>	<p>A new mid-senior career development programme is being developed. A Researcher Development Consultant was recruited in November 2025, and co-design of the new programme has been initiated.</p> <p>Alongside this, existing targeted training sessions have been delivered to mid-senior academic leaders across 2024 and 2025 covering: Impact, Public Engagement, Research Integrity, Narrative CVs and Proposal Costing. All have been designed to enhance knowledge and leadership in these areas.</p> <p>Building on the successful launch of the Inaugural Impact Programme (IIP) in 2023/24, in 2024/25 we saw the introduction of The Profcast—a series of seven podcasts recorded as part of the IIP. Designed to support newly appointed and newly promoted professors, these podcasts featured contributions from 17 professors representing a wide range of disciplines across our schools and campuses. The programme is currently undergoing revision and will be relaunched in 2026 with an expanded suite of activities and opportunities, further strengthening support for our newest professors as they establish their research leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>SO2/SO4</p>

	We continue to update our comprehensive service catalogue on our Research Engagement Directorate SharePoint site, offering a centralised and accurate source of information on services supporting the theme of Excelling in Research and Enterprise. The catalogue integrates resources from the Research Engagement Directorate, Research Grants Finance, and the Business and Enterprise Directorate. It serves as a knowledge management tool, enabling researchers to easily navigate categories or use the search function to access services and guidance. Users can connect with subject matter experts for tailored support, streamlining requests related to research services and fostering efficient collaboration [SM15] .				
14. Improve Research Futures Academy (RFA) training provision	As part of the Research Engagement Directorate restructure, the Research Futures Academy has been incorporated into a new team: Research and Researcher Development. This will integrate researcher development from PGR to Professor and the new Research Futures Hub, with the already established Research Development team. [SM16] .	•	•	•	SO2/SO4
15. Enhance online information demonstrating range of career paths	Work is underway to enhance online information demonstrating a range of career paths, as suitable for Sharepoint and external HWU website pages. Once complete, the new Research Futures Hub content on Sharepoint will provide clear, accessible resources to support both researchers and managers, making clear development opportunities and supporting career progression across all stages of research careers [SM17] .	•			SO2/SO4
16. Redesign the Research Staff Forum to integrate PGR and ECR perspectives, ensuring their roles in championing research culture are recognised and supported	The Research Staff Forum, following scoping, has been replaced with an Academic Reference Group. The reference group has a wider membership and acts as a consulting body for the Research Futures Hub. The Terms of Reference for the Group have been developed and will include the representatives from the Research Staff and PGR communities, as well as PGR supervisors and managers of research staff ensuring that the PGR and research staff perspectives are recognised and supported [SM18] .	•		•	SO2/SO3/SO4

<p>17. Deliver a pilot in Open Research (OR)</p>	<p>Building on the successful delivery of an Open Research (OR) pilot in 2024, as part of three series of good practice exchanges in the Research Culture Café programme, these OR sessions are now integrated as standard into the training pathways for PGRs and Research staff across the university.</p> <p>These sessions provide ECRs with insights into open-access resources, data management, and publication platforms. The integration is building on a very positive pilot phase which saw strong representation from all career stages, schools, and campuses, with excellent engagement and positive feedback from participants [SM19].</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>SO2/SO4/SO5</p>
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