

University of Westminster Researcher Development Action Plan 2025-2027

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Over the past two years, the Research Knowledge Exchange Office has undergone major structural changes, including the integration of the Graduate School under a new directorate, and an expansion of the team. We have been working towards a more cohesive and collaborative approach to researcher development, from Doctoral Researchers to Senior Academics. Throughout this period, we have continued to align our efforts with the Researcher Concordat Principles to which Westminster is a signatory. We have recognized the need to establish solid foundations to ensure that our work is sustainable, monitored, and evaluated effectively and representative of immediate researcher needs and future demands.

For the upcoming year, in line with the University of Westminster's philosophy of "focusing on the fewest things that matter the most," we are streamlining our Researcher Development action plan to concentrate on what we consider the most important objectives to achieve in order to enable more effective and sustained work on Researcher Development in the future. Whilst this is created by the Research Development Working Group, many of the activities are dispersed across the university. The key principle is that, to researchers themselves, the experience of their development be positive, constructive and accessible, responding to needs and directed by those with the expertise to serve them best.

Acronyms

AHoCs (RKE) – Associate Heads of College for Research and Knowledge Exchange (Three different portfolios listed below)

AHoC RC (Associate Head of College with portfolio for Research Culture)

AHoC Impact (Associate Head of College with portfolio for Impact)

AHoC RD (Associate Head of College with portfolio for Researcher Development)

CEDARS - The Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers Survey

DVC (RKE) - Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange

PCW – People Culture and Wellbeing (HR)

PDR – Personal Development Review

RCC – Research Culture and EDI Committee

RD – Researcher Development

RDM - Researcher Development Manager

RDWG – Researcher Development Working Group

RKEO – Research and Knowledge Exchange Office

UREC – University Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Committee

WPDA – Westminster Professional Development Academy

Concordat Pillar	Action and sub-actions	Success Measure	Timescale	Responsibility	Progress: Interim Check Feb 2026 RDWG	Outcome: Interim Check Feb 2026 RDWG
Environment & Culture	Strengthen the governance/ compliance structures to ensure we sustain our commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat.	Reportable data, activities and feedback. Measurable change in sentiment (as assessed in CEDARS)	Oct 2026 July 2027	Research Culture and EDI Committee		
	Create a representative steering group with ongoing responsibilities for delivering on future Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan.	Establishment or renewal of a committee/group with a clear mission statement and terms of reference. Group involves all relevant stakeholders – clear mapping of responsibilities in future action plans	June 2025 Oct 2026	DVC (RKE), AHoCs for Research Culture and Researcher Development Head of RKEO, Researcher Development Manager.		

	Steering Group to formulate an Annual RDWG Action Plan, focussed on practical engagement with researchers and outcomes.	Set out priorities of activities and groups as well as challenges to be resolved. Issue an Annual Report on the Researcher Concordat.	Sept 2025 Sept 2026	RDWG RDWG		
	Undertake a new gap analysis exercise to check for strengths and weaknesses against the Researcher Concordat Principles.	Report created to be used to inform focus areas for future action plan and strength areas highlighted in next year's Researcher Development Concordat Annual Report. Creation of indicators against weak areas to be used in future action plans.	October 2025	Chair of RDWG / Researcher Development Manager (RDM)		
Environment & Culture	Monitoring and Evaluation: Improving/Identifying Key Measures of Success					
	Improve co-ordination between locally delivered and centrally delivered researcher development training, through creation of a centralised calendar to record events and training. Develop plan for consistent/ increased logging of attendance.	All training and events logged in a timely manner on a central calendar. Create a RWDG approved logo Implement a record system for development sessions for researchers. Identify and co-ordinate with providers of internal	Sept 2025 Jan 2026 Ongoing	RDM / College RKE Managers/ Doctoral Researcher Development Manager RDM/ Virtual Research Environment (VRE) Steering committee		

		researcher development (Graduate School, Corporate Comms, Ethics, College and School provision) Promote external opportunities for researcher development to appropriate groups (British Academy, London Higher, University Alliance, AHE)	Ongoing	RDM		
	Identify Key Measures of Success for Researcher Development Training – and use data/feedback collected. Surveys/work that potentially feeds into this include: • Researcher Development Benchmarking Survey • CEDAR Survey • Athena Swan Survey • Research Culture Survey • RKEO Satisfaction Survey • REF	A more relevant/ streamlined feedback form, with built-in options for longitudinal measures. Identification of measures of success in future Researcher Development Action plans Use of surveys to provide feedback and reassessment of efficacy of opportunities offered. Identification and highlighting solutions for issues where identified (e.g. Ringfencing research time, mentoring and coaching).	Ongoing Reviews at each RDWG meeting Ongoing Ongoing	Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG)/ Research Culture and EDI Committee (RCC) RDWG RDWG/RCC RDWG		
	Look systems to automate feedback collection.		Nov 2025	WPDA Steering Group		

	Feed into work on the Westminster Professional Development Academy (WPDA) Platform – to improve feedback system					
	Expand the uptake of researcher development work and attendance at RDWG events	Improvements in numbers in attendance/ cross-university attendance/ attendance from groups with identified needs.	May 2026	RDM, RDWG		
Professional and Career Development	Improving uptake of 10 Days of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)					
	Promotion of our commitment to 10 Days of Professional Development: - Clarifying what comes under the umbrella of CPD (Researcher Development Manager) - Providing more information and online resources for Researchers on CPD opportunities in areas relevant to their discipline (RDM) - Create a communications plan for a sustained campaign to promote this through various channels and action it group	Increased awareness and uptake of 10 Days of Continuous Professional Development in CEDARS 2027 Concordat briefing video Promotion of RD opportunities and culture through the Year of Research Culture Creation of better baseline data on RKEO provision, improved collection of attendance, feedback. Coordination with other areas offering RD services (CETI, Corporate Comms,	July 2027 Aug 2025 Sept 25-26 From Sept 2025 From Sept 2025	RDWG, Researcher Development Manager, Organisation Development RDWG Chair RCC RDM RDM, RDWG		

		Library) on collection of data and offer.				
	Encouraging Researchers to include Researcher Development Discussions in their Professional Development Review (PDR): - Look at how it could be made clearer (during PDR cycles) that Researcher Development Training needs should be discussed as part of the PDR. - Increase communications of this via relevant networks (RDWG members).	Promotion of discussion of research and training needs through PDR process by researchers. Collection of training priorities and understanding of local and wider training needs (annual cycle, 18 months behind) compared with CEDARS	Jan 2026 Jan 2027	RDWG PCW report/ RCC/RDWG		
	Assist Academic Managers of Researchers to upskill on Researcher Development needs: Roll out programme for Line Managers from DCDI to other colleges.	Improvement in section on 'feeling supported by line managers' in the CEDARS Survey in 2027.	July 2026	AHoC for Researcher Development		
Environment & Culture	Fostering a better Research Culture (RC)					
	Year of Research Culture.					

	Kick off the academic year with Inaugural Annual Research Culture Symposium.	Attendance by researchers and professional services colleagues.	October 2025	AHoCs (RKE), Head of RKEO, Research Governance Manager, Research Environment & Schol. Comms Lead,		
	Feedback to colleague networks and all other researchers the actions we have prioritised following the listening campaign.	Improvement in “Section 4 - Environment and Culture” CEDARS Survey 2027. Coordination with Corporate Comms.	July 2026	AHoC for RC, RDM		
	Feedback the actions we have prioritised following their completion of the Researcher Development Benchmarking Survey, CEDAR Survey, RKEO Satisfaction Survey and post-graduate researcher experience surveys.	Improvement in “Section 4 - Environment and Culture” CEDARS Survey 2027. Coordination with Corporate Comms.	July 2026	AHoC for RC, RDM		
	Launch Athena Swan Survey and Research Culture Survey.	Coordination with Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team. Coordination with People Culture and Wellbeing (PCW).	May 2026	AHoC for RC. Head of PCW.		

	Use of AI	Resolve practical use of AI at domain level and support through training. Sponsor a study of AI in Research for guidance and ethical benchmarking.	Dec 2025 June 2026	AHoC for Impact, RD Westminster AI Network		
	Leiden Manifesto/Metrics	Introduce training sessions on • Responsible Research Evaluation • Metrics literacy	May 2026	Research Environment and Scholarly Comms Lead		
	Data Management/ FAIR	Introduce training sessions on • Data protection/privacy • Data storage and processing • Data management plans • FAIR principles in practice	May 2026	Information Compliance Manager Research Data Manager		
	Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech	Provide training and promote AF for researchers Provide training and support of AF for managers and UREC	Feb 2026 March 2026	TBC		
Employment	Improving Career Development Opportunities					
	Establish baseline for researcher community at Westminster	Promotion and analysis of CEDARS survey	July-Aug 2025	Researcher Development Manager, AHoC RDWG		

	Establish priorities and urgencies for researcher development	Agree and implement researcher development plans	Sept 2025	RDWG		
	Support reform of career pathways to Prof & Reader	Incorporate researcher development into PDR process, clarify and support application processes for Profs and Readers	Sept 2025	PRAC, PRAC Working Groups		
	Improve understanding of researcher needs by line managers	Contribute sessions to Assistant Heads Training, ringfencing WAM hours for researchers	Jan 2026	PCW, AHoC for Researcher Development, Researcher Development Manager		
	Promote Researcher Concordat Principles	Develop materials and a campaign to publicise the Concordat and encourage its use in planning and representation.	July 2026	AHoC for Researcher Development, Researcher Development Manager		
	Secure and agree a specific budget for researcher development	Improve planning and events for career development	Sept 2025	RKEO, AHoC for Researcher Development, DVC RKE		