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

Universities and Research Institutes

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*).

Central to our research culture is the belief that everyone who wishes to participate in research should be empowered to do so, regardless of their background or career stage. Guided by our [Being Westminster 2022–29 strategy](#), we place equity, sustainability, and integrity at the core of our research practice.

We elect representatives from all cohorts of researchers to participate in research-related school, college and university committees. Data from CEDARS (culture, employment and development in academic research survey) and PRES (postgraduate research experience survey) alongside a comprehensive listening exercise with colleague networks (Women of Westminster, Q+, Black and Minority Ethnic, Disability etc) have enabled an understanding of what works well and is shaping our researcher development and research culture action plans.

Our work towards an institutional Athena Swan Silver Award, our flagship [Black History Year Researcher Network](#) and involvement in the [100 Black Women Professors NOW](#) initiative are a few of the many examples of our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

All researchers can benefit from our structured development program, developed in conjunction with our Researcher Development Working Group. Our offer is tailored to researchers at various levels of their careers. Research integrity, open access and ethics training are emphasised.

Doctoral researcher training is coordinated by the Graduate School, augmented by subject-specific provision. We were pleased our researchers ranked us 18th out of 100 institutions in the most recent PRES survey. Opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration feature across the researcher lifecycle and are celebrated, for example, during our annual Graduate School Festival. The emphasis of our development programme is to prepare researchers for impactful careers both within and beyond academia.

Early and mid-career researchers (ECRs and MCRs) have individual research conversations and annual professional development review meetings. Skills-building workshops are run in the academic schools and through the university-wide

provision. Our Researcher Development Manager (RDM) and Organisational Development (OD) teams coordinate the university offer. Integral to our research culture is the need to ensure wellbeing. We prioritise self-reflection and provide training on health and resilience. Our writing retreats allow researchers to find space and community, whilst immersing themselves in their research activities. We are members of Vitae, UKRIO (UK Research Integrity Office), ARMA (Association of Research Managers and Administrators), Knowledge Exchange UK, and the UK Consortium on Sustainability Research. Our public and community engagement activities, structures, and governance have been reviewed by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), reinforcing our commitment to inclusive and impactful engagement. Our professional services colleagues also contribute to our research ecosystem, for example via the London Hub for the FameLab and through their sector-leading work on the future of practice-research and FAIRer scholarly landscape. We take pride in pioneering innovative approaches to inclusive research and knowledge exchange and are committed to empowering our research community to thrive with purpose.
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 (<i>max 600 words</i>)
Supporting research and researchers are key strands in our Being Westminster Strategy 2022-2029 and Making a Difference: Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Strategy 2022-2029. In the last two years we restructured the way RKE is managed across our Institution. A DVC (Deputy Vice Chancellor) RKE role has been established, and College roles have been upgraded and expanded to Associate Heads of College (AHoC) RKE. Colleagues in the RKE Office and Graduate School now report to the DVC, enabling closer working and alignment of provision. Senior Research Governance & REF Manager, Research Information and Systems Manager, Research Impact Manager and College Research Managers have been appointed. Collectively they assist with researcher governance, support, research culture, monitoring and reporting. The post of Research Data Officer was regraded to Research Data Manager, as well as Research Ethics and Integrity Officer to Research Ethics and Integrity Manager, to reflect the growing responsibilities of those roles. The scholarly communications team (which includes the University of Westminster Press Manager, Repository and Open Access Manager, and the Research Data Manager) have transitioned back to

the Library & Archives Service, while continuing to lead on policy, advocacy, training, and research systems. The team is merging with the Education offering to form a unified Library Research and Education Service, strengthening research support within Library & Archives.

We reformed our Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG), strengthened resources and commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat Principles. We decided not to pursue HR-EiRA Accreditation this year as we are in reinvigorating our Researcher Development programmes and envisage further top-level strategic work across relevant teams in our Institution.

Informed by data through surveys and consultations (e.g. the CEDARS; RKEO Satisfaction Survey; Researcher Development Benchmarking Survey conducted by Research Consulting etc) we detail below how our strategic objectives fit into the three concordat pillars:

Environment and Culture

- Ensure Doctoral Researchers are supervised by academic teams trained in best practice.
- Support and develop our Research Communities to channel and enhance impact in priority areas.
- Grow our community of Doctoral Researchers ensuring their experience remains sector-leading and the foundation for great careers.
- Understand pressure points in research careers and use resources proactively to support all colleagues at those points e.g. transition to postdoctoral research; to first academic appointment; periods of parental leave and other life events that impact colleagues' research trajectories.
- Ensure researchers work in accordance with institutional policies and procedures as well as the requirements of funders.
- Ensure open research is embedded across the RKE life cycle, while respecting disciplinary differences.

Employment

- Increase support for the career development of researchers of all backgrounds and all career stages.
- Ensure researchers and research managers actively engage in constructive management discussions, continue to reflect and revise our processes for this.
- Review and revise training for line managers of researchers ensuring that they are equipped to provide effective researcher management and Doctoral Researcher supervision.

Professional Development of Researchers

- Review, develop and enhance the Doctoral Researcher development programme year by year to provide the best possible support as they develop themselves and their careers and continue to employment.
- Ensure all new academic colleagues have access to an integrated training programme to allow them to get stuck in and thrive in research and KE at Westminster.
- Provide a portfolio of researcher development events and resources for colleagues at all stages of their research career, informed by feedback, sector knowledge and colleague consultation so that it is always fit for purpose.

Measures for Evaluating Success

In our previous HR-EiRA report we relied on the CEDARS report from 2023 to establish a baseline for measuring success across various objectives. However, we were not able successfully promote the survey to our research community leading to a low response rate. The survey attracted 117 respondents from a potential pool of 2000. Due to such a small sample size, it was impossible to draw meaningful conclusions about the success of various measures that had been put in place in the years prior by using the CEDAR responses.

In 2025 with new staff roles in place to help co-ordinate promotion of the CEDARS survey, we have significantly increased the response rate from 117 to 324 (now around 15% of the total pool). We also chose a different line of enquiry for the institutional questions. In 2023, these were mostly enquiries about researcher awareness of existing provision. In 2025, we asked our researchers about their needs and priorities. As a consequence, the survey flagged up significant issues that, whilst known about in the abstract, gave us far more evidence about what concerns and needs researchers had and what success in resolving these would look like. These mostly focussed on ensuring protection for research time, supporting bid writing and submission, research collaboration, planning processes and doctoral supervision support.

Added to this is our own horizon scanning about what skills and capacities will be required for future researchers, including dealing with AI, entrepreneurial/commercialisation skills and working with industry as a necessary component of building a research career.

The CEDARS survey is the most comprehensive cover for research experience undertaken by the university. Moving the dial in the areas highlighted in the survey is a key indicator of a successful research development effort, and the Action Plan has been formulated to respond to this. Noting this is a Bi-annual survey means there will

be sufficient time to bed in reforms and see results by 2027, when the next survey completes. In the meantime, there are a number of further surveying opportunities that will support the progress of the Plan. These include the • Researcher Development Benchmarking Survey • Athena Swan Survey • Research Culture Survey • RKEO Satisfaction Survey • REF (including the PCE component) The obvious control for performance is measuring the efficacy of the Plan against the commitments and requirements of the Research Development Concordat. This provides standard benchmarking for comparing our efforts in provision of training and creation of an appropriate culture and environment.	
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]	
Environment and Culture (max 600 words)	A consultation with senior leaders and key stakeholders across our institution has enabled us to articulate the overarching principles around research environment and culture via our Research Culture (RC) statement. Our assertion that ‘research is for everyone’ emphasises our commitment to inclusive research and knowledge exchange. We value the contribution of our students; academic and professional service colleagues and are committed to supporting and enabling all colleagues that contribute to our research. We understand the importance of the environment and culture in the generation of ethical, high quality, impactful research. In the past year we have undertaken a series of listening exercises (led by the DVC-RKE and AHoC with responsibility for RC). These frank conversations have taken place with representatives and members of each of our colleague networks: Black and Minority Ethnic, Disability and Faith, Q+, Spirituality and Belief, and Women of Westminster; representatives of our Technical Teams; Professional Services Colleagues; Professor and Readers Group; Early and Mid-

	Career (E/MCR) Researchers; members of the Centre for Education, Teaching and Innovation; and in conjunction with our Library Services and our RKE Office. Findings from these conversations are mirrored in a range of surveys including PRES; Staff Wellbeing Surveys; Professional Development Reviews (surveyed by Organisational Development); Professors and Readers Survey undertaken for the PRAC (Professor and Readers' Awarding Committee) Development Working Group; CEDARS; Researcher Development Benchmarking Survey (conducted by Research Consulting). This information has informed our understanding of what is working well in our environment and culture and where our focus needs to lie in the coming period. We are pleased that the latest PRES (2025) showed the overall satisfaction of our Doctoral Researchers was 82%, in line with the sector more broadly. However, we recognise the need to work on both subject-specific resources as well as the research culture experience. Both ECR and MCRs consistently highlight the need for blocks of uninterrupted time to move forward with their research, we have ensured that the sabbatical scheme is continued in each of our schools (subject areas) and have been building on our already significant expertise in the use of both residential and non-residential retreats. This approach allows us to reach a greater number of ECR and MCR colleagues than the sabbatical scheme and has the benefit of enabling the growth of a community of researchers. Our work in this area, as part of the Black History Researcher Network, has led to our shortlist for the Vitae Impact, Culture and Engagement Awards this year. We continue to find ways to ensure recognition and development of those in the 'third space' and are pleased to have become signatories to the Technician Commitment.
Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)	The RKEO and Graduate School have worked closely to provide more training and resources on employment for Doctoral Researchers and, where relevant, to blend this with the needs of ECRs and others. Doctoral Researchers now have access to register for the RKEO offered training on the staff training platform, and relevant sessions are sign-posted via Graduate School communications channels. We have also worked collaboratively to deliver sessions on a range of topics e.g. Non-Academic Careers in HE Panel at the Graduate School Festival. We now deliver a session to prepare Doctoral Researchers and Post-Doctoral Researchers (How to get Hired

	in HE: Pathways to Glory) for employment in the HE sector, including professional services pathways, and outside academia, looking to careers that move in and out of academia across their full span. The training offered includes the development and commercialisation of Intellectual Property (IP) and other Knowledge Economy opportunities. We are gearing the university up to engage with such challenges through updated IP and consultancy policies and through increased capacity to support spinouts and other commercialisation activities. Our work on equity, diversity and inclusion has led to a commitment to apply for an Institutional Silver Athena Swan Award in July 2026. The Self-Assessment Team and working groups, led by the AHoC RKE for RC and a newly appointed Accreditation Manager, are moving this important piece of work forward. A wide-reaching review of the criteria, development and processes for promotion to Professor and Reader was led by the DVC-RKE and Chair of PRAC this academic year. This includes far stronger framing of the requirements for achieving the status and significantly more engagement by the research community in supporting applicants (with mentoring and advice) as their careers develop. The recommendations will serve to demystify this aspect of the academic journey and is cognisant of the need to enhance the numbers of colleagues from under-represented groups in our Senior Researcher cohorts. The role descriptors for Professors and Readers have been updated to include their contribution to researcher development. We provide a substantive professional and career development opportunities for our researchers and are compliant with the Concordat principles in this pillar. However, we see the opportunities to challenge our assumptions about patterns of employment and the support required to secure roles in a highly competitive industry. The university has published commitments and undertakings through the 'Being Westminster' strategy for enabling and diversifying the research community at Westminster, including the demographics of our researchers, the subject domains in which they operate and developing the potential they have.
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Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)	The university has invested in a single platform for colleague development which was launched in Autumn 2024. It includes a dedicated section for Researcher Development training, increasing the visibility of the training programme to all colleagues. We have ensured that Doctoral Researchers can access the platform and register for training delivered by the RKEO. The Graduate School also launched the Inkpath platform in September 2024, to help doctoral researchers to plan, book and log their development activity. We are working to improve our online resources provision through the development of the Research Project Design Site. This site is being developed with input from relevant professional services and academic colleagues. The aim is to deliver a site that meet the needs as identified by researchers. The site is currently in test phase. This year the Early Career (ECR) and Mid-Career Researchers (MCR) representatives held a network launch event that covered career progression, training opportunities, engagement with surveys that help to shape Researcher Development and that included external speakers. This encouraged active participation in external networks for researchers. ECRs and MCRs are critical to the long-term health of research in the university, they have representation on research-oriented committees, including the Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG). The newly reformed RDWG are undertaking analysis of the CEDAR Survey, and have actively fed into shaping the Professional Development action plan for the upcoming year. Along with the CEDAR Survey other data feeding into the Researcher Development Programme, includes information from: • Researcher Development Benchmarking Survey • RKEO Service Satisfaction Survey • Training needs data from PDR Reviews We have trialled a Training Calendar to capture central and local training to develop a more holistic picture of the Researcher Development offer at the university. We have used this to identify gaps and to share good practice across Schools and Colleges. We have appointed College RKE Managers to strengthen, support and provide co-ordination between Colleges and with the RKEO as well as with other parts of the
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	University that provide researcher-oriented development (such as the Library or Corporate Communications). We have been developing stronger development programmes for supervisors of Doctoral Researchers, including the ethics training module (commenced in June 2023). This module is based on the principles of research ethics review within the UKRIO/ARMA Research Ethics Support and Review guidance (2020) with advice from UKRIO ethics experts, the British Psychological Society amongst others. The Graduate School is rolling out a programme of EDI training for Supervisors in the upcoming academic year. Further work we are focussing on is the provision of mentoring and coaching for researchers, with the support of Organisational Development, with an emphasis on the specialist skills researchers require. Leadership training, that has already been undertaken with our research communities leaders, and will now roll out to professors. We remain committed to funding the Black History Year Researcher Network and involvement in the 100 Black Women Professors NOW, two examples of our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. Prioritising the critical areas for Researcher Development has been an important aspect of refreshing our approach to professional development. Whilst the provision has always been good, it is clear from the CEDARS survey feedback that it has not always reached the people who have needed it the most, nor have their managers always acknowledged the importance of this in the work experience of colleagues. Identifying these issues has been an important part of resolving them and supporting the aspirations of researchers at Westminster.
	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. <i>(max 500 words)</i>
	During this reporting period it became clear that the HR-EiRA framework, while initially valuable, had evolved into a bureaucratic exercise that constrained rather than advanced our Researcher Development work. Activities undertaken revealed that the accreditation process diverted attention from meaningful institutional change, particularly in the absence of sustained organisational development support and amid significant staff turnover. The existing Action Plan no longer reflected the

lived realities or evolving needs of our researcher community and the previous RDWG had little influence on investment in this area.

Following extensive consultation across the RKEO, the DVC, and relevant committees, the university made the strategic decision to discontinue pursuit of HR-EiRA accreditation. This shift has enabled a more agile and context-sensitive approach to fulfilling our Concordat commitments. The Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG) has been reconstituted with broader representation and a renewed remit, it now feeds directly into the newly formed Research Culture and EDI Sub-committee. This structural change ensures stronger governance and clearer lines of accountability.

A key lesson from this transition is the need for robust, systematic data collection and evaluation mechanisms to underpin Researcher Development. Historically, our ability to assess impact of training has been limited by fragmented data and inconsistent feedback loops. As part of the revised Action Plan, we are embedding improved data practices - ranging from enhanced survey design to participation tracking, to longitudinal monitoring of researcher engagement and career progression. Measures of success will focus on evidence-based indicators of progress. These include qualitative and quantitative data on researcher satisfaction, uptake of Researcher Development opportunities, and integration with institutional priorities. The RDWG will play a leading role in interpreting this data and ensuring it informs future planning and resource allocation.

We remain open to revisiting the HR-EiRA accreditation once Vitae's review concludes and our new data-informed Action Plan has matured - likely in 2027. In the meantime, our emphasis is on building a culture of continuous improvement, grounded in meaningful evaluation and responsive to researcher feedback, in a process owned by the RDWG, which has now been allocated its own budget and is more representative of the community it serves.

This period has underscored the importance of flexibility, institutional self-awareness, and the centrality of data in driving strategic change. The modifications now underway position us to better fulfil the spirit of the Concordat and to foster a more dynamic, evidence-led research environment.

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

Strategic Realignment with Concordat Principles

Transition from HR-EiRA accreditation to a flexible, impact-driven Action Plan that reflects the diverse realities of researchers—including ECRs, MCRs, PGRs, part-time colleagues, technicians, and professional services researchers. This shift prioritises relevance, responsiveness, and sustainability.

Inclusive Governance and Representation

Support the reconstituted Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG) including representatives from underrepresented groups, teaching-focused staff, research restarters, and those returning from leave. Ensure that the RDWG feeds into the Research Culture and EDI Sub-committee, with clear mechanisms for annual reporting and stakeholder engagement.

Robust Data Collection and Evaluation Framework

Build systems that capture both structured and informal feedback across constituencies. This includes:

- Centralised tracking of development activities
- Automated feedback via Westminster Professional Development Academy
- Longitudinal surveys (CEDARS, Athena Swan, Research Culture Survey)
- Monitoring research time & significant responsibility for research allocation
- Use of professional development reviews to surface training needs and development priorities

Evidence-Based and Participatory Measures of Success

Define success through indicators that reflect researcher priorities, such as:

- Uptake and diversity of CPD activities
- Improvements in mentoring, coaching, and protected research time
- Enhanced support from line managers
- Increased visibility and access to internal funding, equipment, and travel opportunities

Expanded Access, Visibility, and Engagement

Promote the 10 Days of CPD commitment through targeted campaigns, clearer definitions of CPD, and coordination with departments offering Researcher Development services. Address barriers such as event timing clashes, lack of clarity on opportunities, and inconsistent communication channels.

Culture Building and Strategic Communication

Launch the Year of Research Culture with inclusive events, ongoing listening campaigns, and transparent reporting. Use feedback to shape priorities and foster a shared sense of ownership across the research community. Include initiatives like writing retreats, mentoring schemes, and KE events to build community and capacity.

Future-Facing Development Themes

Introduce training on:

- Responsible metrics and research evaluation (Leiden Manifesto)
- Data governance (FAIR, GDPR, storage, planning)
- Academic freedom and ethical use of AI
- Grant writing, impact analysis, and commercialisation pathways

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 during July/Aug 2025 by the Research Development Manager, Associate Head of College (RKE) responsible for Research Culture, Associate Head of College (RKE) responsible for Researcher Development, Senior Research Governance and REF Manager and Head of RKEO.

The report was passed to members of the RDWG Group to review and was approved via Chair's Action.

The report was submitted as a paper to the Research Culture and EDI Committee and Research Committee in September 2025 for review.

No changes to the report were requested by the committee.

It went to Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee for approval on 15th October 2025.

The Steering Committee requested that we link the document to our Public and Community Engagement Strategy – this has been actioned.

The document then went to the University Executive Board as a starred item.

Signature on behalf of governing body: Andrew Linn (DVC – Research and Knowledge Exchange – Chair of RKE Steering Committee)

Contact for queries: Lisa McGinty; l.mcginty@westminster.ac.uk

This annual report will be analysed by the 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 via the email address listed on the RDC website: www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk.