

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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	University College London
Reporting period	January 2022 - December 2023
Date approved by governing body	8 th February 2024
Date published online	Thursday 27 th June 2024
Web address of annual report	https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/organisational-development/training-inductions-and-leadership/researcher-development/researcher-11
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/organisational-development/training-inductions-and-leadership/researcher-development/researcher-11
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Research Culture Team (researchculture@ucl.ac.uk)
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	26 th June 2024

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)

In 2021, UCL began work to develop a more focused and aligned approach to improving its research culture. Our **10-year Research Culture Roadmap** (Roadmap) published in January 2023 outlines our vision for UCL's research culture. It sets out how UCL is developing a fair, collaborative and inclusive research culture, where both our research and research community can thrive. It brings together new and existing strands of activity in alignment with [UCL's Strategic Plan 2022-27](#). The Research Culture team oversees delivery working alongside partners across the institution (e.g. Doctoral School, Organisational Development, Researcher Careers). The Roadmap sets out a number of themes and enablers around which activity is organised:

Themes

Transparent and fair career development: UCL wants researchers, at all levels and from diverse backgrounds, to understand the different ways they can progress, feel supported in developing their careers, and trust that merit will be the arbiter of success.

People-centred leadership and management: UCL wants managers and leaders to prioritise people and teams. We want them to seize opportunities to develop the research leadership skills they need for the future and to take ownership for creating a healthy research culture – that supports researcher wellbeing as well as research excellence – in their local context.

Opportunities to collaborate and innovate: UCL wants our research community to have the time, tools and licence to fail fast and learn from their mistakes in a culture that values continuous improvement. We want people to be able to connect with projects and networks – across disciplines, geographies, sectors and cultures – and to be able to develop new skills and perspectives that support both the delivery of their research and their personal development.

Openness and integrity in our research and innovation: UCL wants the principles of Open Science and research integrity to be at the heart of our research practice, alongside a broader definition of research excellence that rewards and recognises non-traditional contributions. We want to embrace these principles not just for the sake of compliance, but in recognition of the value they bring to our research.

Supportive and inclusive environment: UCL wants every contributor to research to feel valued and recognised in an institution that acknowledges and rewards team endeavour. We want our researchers to experience psychological safety and know that their mental health and wellbeing are prioritised. We want greater diversity and inclusion at all levels to lead to diversity of thinking and a strong sense of belonging.

Enablers

Data about the research community: UCL needs better data to inform strategic decision-making, track the progress and impact of initiatives, and better understand, segment and tailor efforts to our research community.

User-centric communications: UCL needs to demystify how the institution works at the same time as simplifying the ‘ask’ we make of our research community, signposting support, and setting clear expectations of what a good research culture looks like.

Partnership working: Working in partnership internally with faculties and functions and externally with our peers will help UCL deliver better solutions to ensure a positive and inclusive research culture.

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*)

UCL’s delivery of the three pillars of the Concordat is guided by its institutional Research Culture strategy – the goals and enablers that are outlined in the Roadmap. An exercise to map the Concordat principles to the Roadmap has been undertaken by the Research Culture team and this initial mapping is shown below.

Goal 1: Transparent and fair career development

- a. Make promotions processes and practices more transparent, inclusive and aligned with UCL policy, for research-active staff of all backgrounds and career stages (*EI3; EM3*)
- b. Improve the quantity and quality of appraisals of research-active staff (*PCDI2; PCDM1; PCDR4*)
- c. Support Early Career Researchers towards independence (*PCDR5*)

- d. Increase accessibility to, and take-up of, training opportunities (*PCDI1; PCDI6; PCDM3, PCDM4; PCDR1; PCDR3*)
- e. Increase awareness and understanding of varied career pathways for Early Career Researchers (*PCDI3; PCDM2; PCDR2*)
- f. Explore targeted career development support for staff with specialist expertise, such as technicians
- g. Ensure fair reward, in line with sector standards (*E11*)

Goal 2: People-centred leadership and management

- a. Define and develop research leaders for the future (*PCDI4*)
- b. Establish people management as a critical activity for managers of researchers and a priority for the institution (*E12; E15*)
- c. Support Principal Investigators to develop their leadership and management skills (*E14; EM1; PCDM5*)
- d. Develop a culture of two-way feedback (*EM4; ER3*)
- e. Ensure that our leaders are informed about the priorities for research culture and supported in their practical implementation (*ECM5; EM5*)
- f. Amplify the voice of research-active staff and students in institutional decision-making (*ECR5; E17; EM5; ER4*)

Goal 3: Opportunities to collaborate and innovate

- a. Free up researcher time to collaborate and innovate by implementing time-saving initiatives
- b. Increase effective collaboration across disciplines and cultures to support diversity of thinking (*PCDI5; PCDR6*)
- c. Increase talent mobility across the institution and externally
- d. Empower trial and error and continuous improvement

Goal 4: Openness and integrity in our research and innovation

- a. Increase research transparency, where methods, analysis and data are reported and disseminated openly, clearly and comprehensively (*ECI5; ECM2*)
- b. Develop sector-leading practices around open data
- c. Support and reward non-traditional outputs alongside more traditional ones
- d. Embed the use of responsible metrics in practice
- e. Foster transdisciplinary research, engaging stakeholders beyond academia

Goal 5: Supportive and inclusive environment (*ECR1; ECR4*)

- a. Recognise and support team science and the broad range of contributions to the research endeavour, including the input of research support staff

- b. Increase diversity and inclusion at all levels, in particular with regard to gender, race and disability (*ECI2; ECI4; ECM1; ECM4*)
- c. Develop the skills and environment that will enable constructive disagreement
- d. Increase awareness and openness about mental health (*ECI3; ECM3; ECR3*)
- e. Explore ways of reducing the precarity associated with research contracts (*EI6*)

Enablers: User-centric communications (*EM2; ER1; ER2; ECR2*); Partnership working; Data about the research community (*ECI6*)

The Research Staff Consultative Group (RSCG) (chaired by Professor David Bogle, Pro-Vice Provost (Doctoral School & ECR Staff) oversees the training and career development opportunities for UCL researchers. The RSCG provides a forum for researchers to input into research staff development strategy, policy and operations. The group is tasked with identifying priorities for change and improvement within existing activities, practice and policies to ensure that UCL develops and maintains a first-class environment for its research staff community. This includes overseeing the progress of the implementation of the HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Action Plan. UCL's [HREiR Action Plan 2022/24](#) provides further details on specific actions being undertaken to deliver on UCL's commitment to the Concordat.

Work is currently being led by the Research Culture team to develop a set of meaningful indicators to measure progress against the Research Culture Roadmap. The measures by which UCL will evaluate its progress and success are expected to be agreed in 2024.

Concordat Principles Key

EC = Environment and Culture

E = Employment

PCD = Professional and Career Development

I = Institutions obligations

M = Managers of researchers obligations

R = Researchers obligations

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]

<p>Environment and Culture (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the delivery of research culture activity at UCL, a Research Culture Programme Board was established in March 2023. The Board has oversight of UCL’s Research Culture Programme and is made up of research and professional services staff from a range of disciplines, roles and experiences. The Board approves and oversees the delivery of the portfolio of projects and provides strategic guidance in relation to the broader research culture agenda. <i>(Roadmap goal(s): all)</i> • To support the effective delivery of research culture initiatives, UCL has recruited a dedicated specialist Research Culture team into the Office of the Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement). The team provides project management; change and improvement; reporting and evaluation; and enabling activity around communications, data and partnerships, to deliver the Research Culture Roadmap. <i>(Roadmap goal(s): all)</i> • UCL retained the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) after an 8-year review in November 2022. <i>(Roadmap goal(s): see initial mapping above)</i> • UCL received the University Mental Health Charter Award in December 2022. <i>(Roadmap goal(s): 5.d)</i> • Following an institutional-wide consultation, UCL published a revised Code of Conduct for Research. A Town Hall meeting was held in June 2023 to launch the revised code, discuss the changes and what it means for research at UCL. <i>(Roadmap goal(s): 4.a, communication enabler)</i> • A complete redesign of the Workplace Health website was undertaken in 2023. This redesign improved website navigation and discoverability and included a new visual identity and new resources, including internal and external resources available to support colleagues’ mental health and wellbeing. A 67% increase in visits to the website was seen in
---	---

comparison to 2021/22. Additionally, the **Workplace Health Campaign schedule** was redesigned to strategically align with the three pillars of Being Well at UCL: Healthy Mind (World Mental Health Day campaign), Healthy Work (Reset your Working Ways) and Healthy Body (Move More Challenge). (*Roadmap goal(s): 5.d, communication enabler*)

- In 2022/23 the UCL Careers Researcher Programme undertook work to explore the best ways to serve the **employability needs of researchers from underrepresented groups**. This included analysis of participant data from 2018-22 and three focus groups with researchers from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds. (*Roadmap goal(s): 5.b*)

Academic Managers of Researchers

- UCL has developed and published **ten case studies** that showcase excellence in research culture. The case studies detail examples of successful research culture projects which have been designed and delivered by members of UCL's research community. The case studies are particularly useful for academic managers of researchers as a resource to help them understand how they can contribute to the development of a more positive research culture. (*Roadmap goal(s): communication enabler*)

Researchers

- The fourth annual **Festival of Early Stage Researchers** (FESR) took place across 5 days in March 2023. FESR consisted of over 25 hours of online and face-to-face events, focused around three key themes: research leadership; research culture; and researcher futures (careers, finance and wellbeing). Content was **co-created with the researcher community**. 730 researchers attended at least one event during the festival and engagement increased from the previous year with 20% more registrations than in 2022. (*Roadmap goal(s): 2.a, 5*)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus group with researchers from underrepresented ethnic groups identified an appetite for a careers event focusing on race and identity in academic careers. In response, the UCL Careers Researcher Programme piloted a new event, Navigating Race and Identity in Academic Careers, in summer 2023. The event featured four established academics of colour sharing their experiences. This received extremely positive responses with 100% satisfaction reported, and a net promoter score of 9. (<i>Roadmap goal(s): 5.b</i>)
<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new People Management Essentials programme was launched in November 2022 as part of Lead at UCL. Lead at UCL is a bespoke online learning platform which supports leaders in developing their people management skills. The People Management Essentials programme equips UCL people managers with the knowledge and skills to manage teams and individuals effectively. It can be completed as an online-only or a blended programme. (<i>Roadmap goal(s): 2.b, 2.c</i>) • The Lab Leader Series, a collection of video interviews with some of UCL's leading lab leaders discussing the key challenges facing researchers across UCL, was launched in February 2022. The series aims to provide the whole research community with invaluable insights and practical advice on building successful research teams and projects. The online interviews are supported by Lab Leader Live events which take a deeper dive into the challenges impacting researchers across UCL. To date the live sessions have covered the following topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best practices for securing research funding 2. Developing yourself and others 3. Optimising time 4. Developing your leadership capacity 5. Bridging academia and industry

The live sessions provide researchers with the opportunity to pose their own questions to a panel of expert lab leaders. (*Roadmap goal(s): 2.c*).

- UCL has developed an **updated appraisal form** which is for the specific use of academic, teaching and research staff. The form structures the appraisal around the four elements of UCL Academic Careers Framework: research, education, enterprise and external engagement and institutional citizenship. The form also includes a statement on UCL's Concordat commitment to provide opportunities, structured support, encouragement and time for researchers to engage in a minimum of 10 days of professional development per year. (*Roadmap goal(s): 1.b*).

Academic Managers of Researchers

- Within five months of launch over 950 people managers (across all roles) had enrolled on the online-only **People Management Essentials** programme. The blended programme saw an increase in approximately 47% of participants being completely confident about their responsibilities as a UCL people manager. (*Roadmap goal(s): 2.c*)

Researchers

- An open call for membership of the **Research Culture Community Steering Group (CSG)** was launched in December 2023. This followed the appointment of a Chair for the CSG, Dr Natalie Marchant, Associate Professor who was appointed following a competitive process. The CSG is made up of a cross-section of the UCL research community and will play a vital part in overseeing the development and operationalisation of activity to support a fair, collaborative and inclusive research culture at UCL. It will provide feedback on the design and delivery of research culture initiatives to maximise their positive impact and identify priority issues related to research culture to enable successful

	<p>delivery of the Research Culture Roadmap. (<i>Roadmap goal(s): 2.f</i>)</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated webpage pages for the Researcher Development Programme were published. This included details on a new five-step approach to support researchers in planning a personalised skills development journey, and the publication of a new training course catalogue. (<i>Roadmap goal(s): communication enabler</i>) • The UCL Careers Researcher Programme improved communication of their services (one-to-one careers appointments, workshops, employer events and vacancy sourcing) via the creation of a more effective mailing channel to communicate with research staff. This likely led to the increased number of researchers seen engaging with the programme. (<i>Roadmap goal(s): 1.d, communication enabler</i>) • Responding to the emerging needs of researchers, the UCL Careers Researcher Programme piloted a new workshop in summer 2023 What's the Story with Narrative CVs? The workshop covered the why, where, who and how to use of Narrative CVs, and provided researchers with examples and tips on how to develop an effective Narrative CV. The pilot was received successfully – a 100% satisfaction was reported by attendees and the workshop received a net promoter score of 8.3. (<i>Roadmap goal(s): 1.d</i>) • The UCL Careers Researcher Programme expanded its case study interviews to inform researchers about international research careers. Seven international academic case studies were developed as well as two international case studies from beyond academia – greatly broadening the global representation of the researcher career case study collection. Additionally, the case study collection was enhanced with the curation of a new section focused on professional careers in higher education/the management of research, which included three new case study

interviews from PhD graduates now working in this sector. (*Roadmap goal(s): 1.e*)

- The **Research and Innovation Portal** was updated to include a section titled 'Develop your career'. The Portal aims to be a one-stop shop that enables the research community to find guidance and resources for delivering high-quality research and innovation projects at UCL. Specifically, the 'Develop your Career' section aims to help the research community with any HR issues and development opportunities and includes information on training and development, reward and recognition, mentoring and coaching, finding partners and collaborators and developing teaching. (*Roadmap goal(s): communication enabler*)

Academic Managers of Researchers

- UCL Organisational Development (OD) launched a bespoke leadership training: **Experienced Principal Investigators**. The training helps senior researchers reflect on their leadership skills, amplify their strategic planning and focus on creating conditions to enable them to become an effective research leader. The programme has trained 50 PIs and received almost universally positive feedback from participants. (*Roadmap goal(s): 2.b, 2.c*)
- In addition to the above UCL delivers 11 other **leadership programmes** annually aimed at supporting the development for UCL Leaders and Prospective Leaders (including Advancing Principal Investigators aimed at supporting new research team leaders or experienced researchers with the potential to lead a research team). In 2022/23 55% of attendees were researchers, teaching or academic members of staff. (*Roadmap goal(s): 2.a, 2.b, 2.c*)

	<p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research staff engagement with the Researcher Development Programme and the Careers Researcher Programme workshops increased by 81% and 10% respectively in 2022/23, compared with 2021/22. The Researcher Development Programme delivered 372 courses in 2022/23. 2471 researchers (equivalent to 77% of researchers employed at UCL), 50 technicians and 989 professional service staff supporting research, attended at least one training course during this period. <i>(Roadmap goal(s): 1.c, 1.d, 1.e, 1.f, 2.a, 2.b)</i> • The Fellowship Incubator competitively awarded seed-funding to ECRs, to enable research-related activities that would enhance their academic CVs and enable professional development. For example, awards were made to support work that may lead to a publication, or that would strengthen a Fellowship/other funding applications. 39 awards were made in 2022 and 43 awards were made in 2023. Feedback on the early impact of seed-funding provided in April 2022 indicated that the Fellowship Incubator allowed ECRs to gain vital experience and independence, in support of their career development. <i>(Roadmap goal(s): 1.c)</i>
<p>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)</p>	
<p>In 2023, responsibility for UCL’s commitment to the Concordat was transferred from the Organisational Development (OD) team to the newly established Research Culture team. This move aligns with UCL’s work to develop a more focused and aligned approach to improving its research culture. Onboarding of the new Research Culture team began in January 2023 but was not completed until August – this report, therefore, is reflective of a transitional period.</p> <p>UCL’s HREiR Action Plan 2022/24 was very ambitious: 100+ actions were set across all 49 responsibilities and were owned by 18+ different teams across the Institution. Following feedback from HREiR, UCL is working towards a more focused</p>	

approach, with key teams coming together to deliver fewer and more impactful actions, in alignment with the Roadmap. With this in mind, we have already begun aligning our Concordat commitments to the Roadmap as detailed above.

56% of respondents to UCL's 2021 CEDARS survey indicated that they had never heard of the Concordat. Therefore, it is evident that work is needed to ensure the researcher community is aware of it. However, the principles of the Concordat are embedded in UCL's Code of Practice for Research Staff that all joining staff are introduced to. Therefore, all new starters at UCL learn about the principles of the Concordat from the start of their employment at UCL.

The Concordat and HREiR Action Plan is now a standing agenda item on the Research Staff Consultative Group, which should lead to an increased awareness within the research community. Additionally, we expect the newly-formed Research Culture Community Steering Group to engage with the Concordat, and by co-designing initiatives with the research community we hope to raise further awareness of the Concordat.

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

- In partnership with the British Academy, UCL alongside the University of Greenwich, King's College London, and Middlesex University will launch the new London cluster in the **British Academy's Early Career Researcher Network (ECRN)** in February 2024. The ECRN is an inclusive, UK-wide network for and led by ECRs in the humanities and social sciences, providing opportunities for skills development and networking. *(Roadmap goal(s): 1.d)*
- OD will launch an updated online induction for research staff: **Belong at UCL – Research Staff** in 2024. The online welcome package will also be accompanied with live sessions throughout the year. *(Roadmap goal(s): communication enabler)*
- Workplace Health will pilot four webinars aimed at equipping supervisors to support researchers to build mental health and psychological safety. Focusing on four areas, the webinars will aim to **increase awareness and openness about mental health and wellbeing** in the researcher community. *(Roadmap goal(s): 5.d)*
- The **fair and transparent academic promotions project** is part of a long-term UCL programme aiming to ensure that academic promotions processes are transparent and fair across all career stages. The first phase of the project

will review the promotions process for ECRs. It will look to understand how existing processes and practices align and diverge from the UCL Academic Careers Framework and make recommendations on how to achieve greater consistency. A second project phase will look at trialling improvements to processes and practices. (*Roadmap goal(s): 1.a*)

- A pilot project will aim to understand the **impact of coaching on supporting research culture leaders**. Individual and group coaching sessions will focus on exploring topics on improving research culture and environment and how this impacts the research community. (*Roadmap goal(s): 2.c, 2.e*)
- Work will be undertaken to **improve internal communications with UCL's research community**. The project will look to understand the volume and content of communications that research staff receive; evaluate the effectiveness of these communications; and identify gaps or potential methods to improve communications to research staff. (*Roadmap goal(s): communication enabler*)
- Alongside the UK Reproducibility Network, UCL will support the development and delivery of a **Train the Trainer Programme** across the institution to aid cross-institutional dissemination of open research knowledge and skills. (*Roadmap goal(s): 4.b*)
- OD will pilot a new **experiential training journey** to help researchers build hands-on experiences from theory to delivery. As part of this, the UCL Careers Researcher Programme will pilot a week-long **Researcher Consultancy Challenge**. The challenge will provide training on consultancy skills through a group non-academic consultancy project with external commercial-organisations. Additionally, the UCL Careers Researcher Programme will deliver three one-day **Hackathons**. The Hackathons will give teams of researchers one day to work on a real-world problem for a commercial partner. (*Roadmap goal(s): 1.e*)
- A **research ethics reform** is underway that will include implementation of a revised governance and committee structure; procurement of a new online ethics application and review system; and revision of the research ethics policy. Outcomes are expected to include improvements in the experience of the research community and increase capacity for training. (*Roadmap goal(s) 1.d, 5, communication enabler*)

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 drafted by the Research Culture team with input from colleagues across UCL, including OD, Careers, Doctoral School, Research Integrity and Workplace Health. The report was reviewed by Professor David Bogle, Pro-Vice-Provost (Doctoral School & ECR Staff) and Chair of the Research Staff Consultative Group. The report was signed off by the Research Innovation and Global Engagement Committee, chaired by Professor Geraint Rees, UCL Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation & Global Engagement) on 08/02/2024.



Signature on behalf of governing body:

Professor Geraint Rees, Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation & Global Engagement)

Contact for queries: researchculture@ucl.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