

University of Winchester: six-year review report

1. Context

The University is a teaching focused institution with a strongly integrated research provision, which informs its teaching and delivers social and economic impact. It is not common institutional practice to recruit on fixed-term contracts and all our internally funded research-only staff are on permanent contracts. The University has reduced the number of staff on research-only contracts from 28 to 13 (including 3 externally funded and 1 maternity cover) since the last HR Excellence in Research Award report in 2018. In the same period, the University has increased the number of postgraduate researchers (including professional doctorate students) from 204 to 238. The University 's primary audience for the Concordat is its 149 research and teaching staff, who are assigned between 25% and 30% of their workload for research activity, and its 13 research-only staff.

The University of Winchester has recently appointed a new Vice-Chancellor and is currently developing and implementing a new University level strategic plan, to be followed by an accompanying research and innovation strategy. The University is also amid conducting a major research review, to evaluate and revise the research infrastructure and focus support on areas of excellence. These strategic and infrastructural changes provide a significant opportunity for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers to directly inform substantial institutional change.

2. Internal evaluation

The internal evaluation was undertaken by Research & Innovation, taking into account the perspectives and experiences of a range of colleagues from across the institution. For example, a draft of the HREiR Action Plan, with updates on progress, has been sent to staff on research-only contracts and to all research and teaching staff, via the REF Unit of Assessment Leads. These constituencies were invited to provide feedback and offer suggestions. The University-level Research and Innovation Committee (which reports to University Senate) received two versions of the draft, were involved in the evaluation of past progress, and approved of the final submission.

The University's current research and innovation infrastructure facilitates communication lines from individual researchers and monitoring of progression towards targets, through research subject units (Unit of Assessment working groups) to a university level research committee, University Research Group), which in turn reports to University Research Management Group.

In addition, a Postgraduate Research Education Committee, chaired by the Head of Doctoral School, manages all quality assurance, support, and progression related to doctoral students and their supervisors.

The University has five Faculties, led by Faculty Deans, supported by a PGR Co-ordinator, Research Ethics Officers, and Unit of Assessment leads. The University's current Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy is complemented by Faculty RKE Strategies. However, the new Research &

Innovation strategy and newly formed Research & Innovation department will be supported by Unit level strategies, held within faculties.

Consultation for evaluation is regularly facilitated in line with quality assurance targets, and formal and informal input is sought through all relevant committees, in addition to strategy workshops.

From Academic Year 2023/24, researcher engagement will be enhanced through the establishment of a Research Concordat Working Group and a quarterly research-only focus group, both chaired by the newly appointed Head of Research Environment and Impact.

3. Key achievements 2018-2022

Key achievements against the Strategy in the previous four years include 100% of staff on recruitment panels having undertaken unconscious bias training and the introduction of a presentation from the Director of Research & Innovation at academic staff induction. The University has assured that staff on research-only contracts are recruited to the appropriate grade, evidenced by zero successful appeals against grading, recognising the **importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research (P1)**.

To ensure that researchers are **recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research (P2)**, a mentoring scheme with associated hours has been implemented for all new academic staff and an external research mentoring scheme was developed and implemented in 2021/22, with eligibility for all academic research staff. An internal funding scheme has been introduced to support academic staff, specifically with professional development. In the context of doctoral researchers and their supervisors, the Head of Doctoral School has monitored annual review forms to ensure a 100% return rate and support for PGR needs.

A new training session focused on careers beyond academia has been embedded into the PGRS Training Programme to ensure researchers are **equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in and increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment (P3)**. To ensure that the **importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career (P4)**, 100% of applicants for Research or Knowledge Exchange promotion have met with the Director of Research & Innovation for honest and transparent advice on their prospects for success.

A new bespoke ethics training session has been implemented for supervisors and PGR students, supporting **individual researchers to share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning (P5)**.

The University's retention of the Athena Swan Bronze Award shows its commitment to **diversity and equality being promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers (P6)**.

The University is fully engaged with GuildHE Research and Cathedrals Group Research groups, and frequently contributes through these groups and directly to sector level **strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK (P7)**.

The University has faced some challenges common to the sector, associated with Covid, and, in addition, the majority of the responsible individuals for delivering on the previous strategy have left the University in the previous 18 months (Director of RKE; Director of HR; Head of Careers; Research Funding Manager; Director of Postgraduate Research Students), with several of these posts remaining vacant for substantial periods of time. Due to these circumstances, many of the action points in the previous plan were not completed and the current plan takes the opportunity to recalibrate institutional engagement with the Concordat. With the increased investment and the successful recruitment of new Research and Knowledge Exchange practitioners, the University is confident it can deliver on the forward action plan. The previous strategy was heavily focused on PGR students, whereas the current plan is more substantially directed towards the career development of academic research staff and the virtues and values which underpin the research culture at the University of Winchester.

4. Strategy 2022-25

Development of University Research and Innovation Strategy and infrastructure

The University's Research and Innovation Strategy is being reviewed in 2022/23 to ensure that it is fully aligned to institutional strategic ambitions and changing priorities in the Higher Education sector, and that these are supported infrastructure changes and resource allocation. While it is not yet possible to commit to many specific strategic or operational ambitions, the University will be utilising the Concordat to guide its strategic and operational development.

Through the establishment of a Research Concordat Working Group in 2023/24, reporting directly to every meeting of the Senate Research & Innovation Committee, the visibility of the Concordat and its integration into the strategic and operational work of the University will ensure cultural progression in line with its principles. This Working Group will be chaired by the new post of Head of Research Environment and Impact, who will manage reviewing and reporting on environment and culture. The Group's membership will include at least two research-only staff and PGR student representation.

Initial targeted actions will include the additional establishment of a quarterly research-only focus group in 2023/24; opening PGR careers training to research-only staff; and the development of a series of workshops for managers (Deans, Unit Leads, and Heads of Department) to facilitate understanding of and engagement with University and Unit level research environment and culture, and contribution to policies and practices.

The integration of Concordat principles and associated local level actions into all Unit strategies and operational plans, with clear steps for accomplishment that can be regularly monitored, will be aligned with the implementation of support to researchers outside of the workload model (research-only staff) to enable 10 days professional development pro rata per year.

A training programme for researchers and managers will be developed and implemented, to ensure they work in accordance with relevant employment legislation and codes of practice, institutional policies, and the terms and conditions of grant funding, as well as being aware of their reporting obligations and responsibilities. Alongside this, a university level event on research integrity and professional conduct will be held for managers, disseminating key aspects to all academic research staff and PGR students. All activities, under the new Research and Innovation Academy, will be

mapped to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and a new system of reporting and accountability will be established. This will be in addition to the programmes already run for PGRs. Measures will be aimed to support career progression, equality, and research sustainability through job satisfaction and retention.