

**Strategy for implementation of the  
Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

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# **Strategy for implementation of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers***

V4 March 2020

## **1 Context**

Glyndŵr University commits to acting in accordance with the principles of the revised national *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (known as the 'Researcher Development Concordat') published in September 2019. The principles are:

1. Environment and Culture: Excellent research requires a supportive and inclusive research culture
2. Employment: Researchers are recruited, employed and managed under conditions that recognise and value their contributions
3. Professional and career development: Professional and career development are integral to enabling researchers to develop their full potential

This strategy is concerned with putting these principles into practice. It has a focus on staff whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed specifically for this purpose, in line with the focus of the Concordat itself (generally, Post-Doctoral Research Assistants). The University also extends the provisions of this strategy to Graduate Teaching Assistants. GTAs are not engaged in research in that role; their principal relationship with the University is that of postgraduate research student. However their employment as a GTA indicates that they are at an early stage in a potential academic career path and so it is felt appropriate to apply this strategy to GTAs. For both PDRAs and GTAs, the University's overall aim is to ensure that they are supported in taking steps to realise their own career ambitions.

## **2 University Environment**

The focus on staff whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and GTAs marks a departure from previous iterations of this strategy, which had previously been concerned with all academic and academic related staff. The University is committed to ensuring effective support for the professional and career development of academic staff generally, and training and development related to research-related skills and ambitions including PGR supervision is routinely included in annual programmes. The annual PDR process now includes an expectation that staff produce and/or update a Personal Research Plan which also provides opportunities to reflect on, discuss and take forward training and development issues. Consideration is being given to how research ambitions of other University staff may also be supported. Regarding PGR students, the University's provision is consistent with the RCUK Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training. The outcome of consultation undertaken through the Research Committee and within academic departments has confirmed that it is appropriate to focus this strategy on staff at very early stages of academic career paths.

This strategy is informed by and is consistent with the University's Vision and Strategy to 2025, which includes as priorities, 'Develop research capacity and capability of the university by developing its staff', and 'Grow the post-graduate research community'.

The approach to implementing the Vision and Strategy are set out in the University's Research Strategy and its associated [annual] Action Plan. The Priority Aims are to:

1. Achieve Research Degree Awarding Powers
2. Develop research capacity and capability of the university by developing its staff
3. Grow the post-graduate research community
4. Increase the number of active industrial and academic research collaborations
5. Grow outputs and income associated with research
6. Increase the visibility, impact and value of our research

Supporting and encouraging colleagues at early stages of potential academic and research careers are entirely consistent with these aims.

### **3 Recent developments**

The University employs five Graduate Teaching Assistants at the time of writing. GTAs are MPhil/PhD students. Their GTA duties are not in themselves research activities, but their dual role is seen as offering an early stage academic career path. The Researcher Development Tutor facilitated meetings with GTAs in 2017/18 the outcome of which was that no specific training requirements were identified. GTAs now continue to meet informally providing peer support, and are included in all researcher development opportunities.

An expectation that academic staff complete (or update) and submit Personal Research Plans (PRPs) was introduced in 2018/19. The annual PDR process includes explicit reference to PRPs. PRPs include opportunities to comment on perceived barriers, requirements, etc. as well as a framework for setting out achievements and forward plans.

Induction for new academic staff has included a session on Research Support and Expectations, from 2017/18. All staff attending and responding to the feedback request have reported that they 'feel more confident and informed in relation to research and the expectations upon researchers.'

A structured mentoring scheme was begun in 2017/18 and offered to staff with 5 trained mentors in 2018/19. A review submitted to the Research Committee in October 2018 concluded 'Although we recognise that the mentoring pilot scheme was small scale it has had a number of positive outcomes upon which a foundation has emerged which contributes to the overall research support mechanisms available across the Institution. This has the potential to increase research publications and enhance individual research profiles'. It recommended a second round of mentor training to enable extending the scheme in 2019/20. However, staffing changes in 2019 have prevented the scheme being extended in the immediate future. Informal mentoring is continuing, but re-establishment of formal scheme will require appropriate resources to become available.

A 'Research Development Awards' scheme was introduced in 2017/18 and is continuing. The main aim is to help academic staff form productive external research collaborations and to generate income from research. Three types of award are available: External Funding; First Collaboration; and Conference Contribution. Four colleagues were supported in 2017/18 and 2018/19; four awards have been approved to date in 2019/20. Every award holder gives a talk about their research at an 'Open House' event. The Open House informal 'research conversation' format continues to be popular, with typical attendance of 15-20 staff and/or students.

#### **4 Concordat Strategic aims to 2023**

In implementing the Research Development Concordat, the University's strategic aims are aligned with the three principles of the Concordat, and are:

1. **Environment and culture:** continue to build and enrich the research environment across all areas in the University through the Associate Deans (Research) and the Research Strand Leads, encouraging research groups to form and collaborate.
2. **Employment:** ensure a focus on recognition, explicitly including PDRAs and GTAs in the University's processes for self-reflection, for the availability of critical friends, and for review of research ambitions and barriers.
3. **Professional and careers development:** ensure that PDRAs and GTAs are included in all relevant opportunities to take part in events and training & development activities, supporting the acquisition of transferable skills and valuable experiences.

#### **5 Arrangements for Managing Implementation**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) has overall responsibility for implementation of the Concordat. Formal Governance oversight is the responsibility of the Research Committee. The Research Committee's membership includes senior managers, research leaders, contract research staff and postgraduate research student representation. Direct operational responsibility is delegated as appropriate, to Faculty Deans, Associate Deans (Research), Human Resources colleagues, the Researcher development Tutor and Research Office colleagues. Communication with staff regarding the Concordat and its implementation is done through direct communication with researchers and their managers, through the electronic staff newsletter, and through induction programmes for new staff.

Implementation of this strategy is supported by an annual Action Plan which identifies key issues and associated requirements. The Action Plan is agreed and progress monitored by the Research Committee with recommendations made to Academic Board as required. Key issues for inclusion in the annual Action Plan are identified through consultation meetings with Associate Deans (Research) and 'Research Strand Leads (research champions in specific subject areas), staff surveys, the University's PDR process and through discussion in fora such as the twice yearly all-staff conferences.