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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	Bath Spa University
Reporting period	2024/25
Date approved by governing body	10 December 2025
Date published online	16 December 2025
Web address of annual report	HR Excellence in Research – Bath Spa University https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/research-and-enterprise/research-strategy/hr-excellence-in-research/
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	HR Excellence in Research – Bath Spa University https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/research-and-enterprise/research-strategy/hr-excellence-in-research/
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Ms Sarah Priston Head of Research Office
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat (refer to Researcher Development Concordat Reporting Guidance)	5 January 2026

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)*
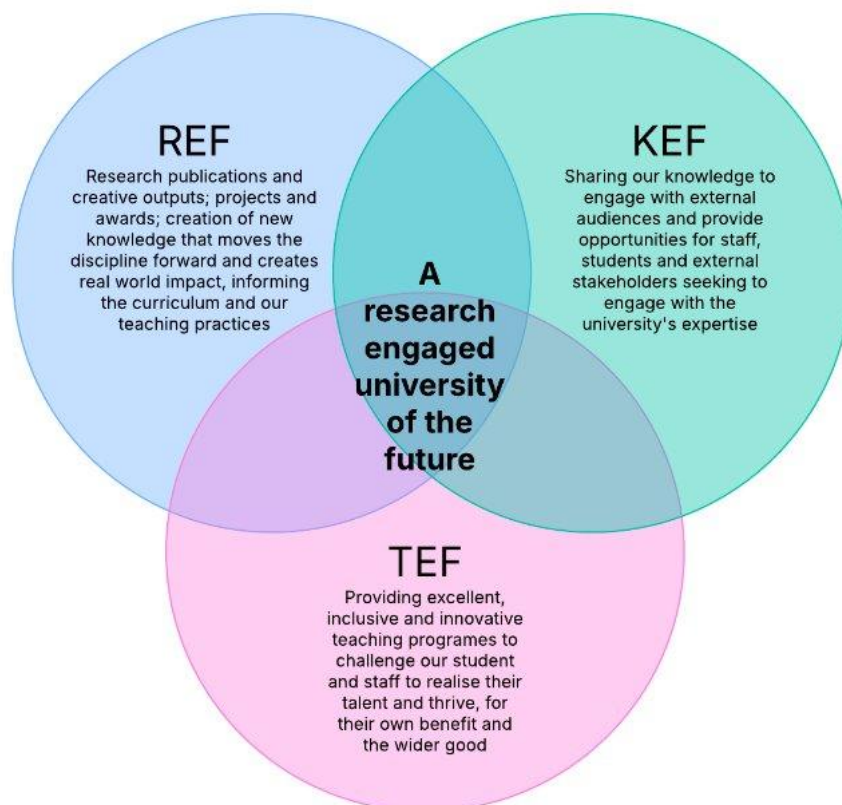
Bath Spa University (BSU) fosters a research-engaged environment driven by creativity, excellence, and sustainability. The University supports interdisciplinary research through strategic centres, innovative funding, and collaborative partnerships, both domestically and internationally. BSU promotes responsible and equitable research, open access, and civic engagement, aligning with national concordats on research integrity and sustainability. We invest in impact-driven initiatives, funded internally and by our AHRC Impact Accelerator, and in participatory research models. The institution maintains strong regional ties, contributing to economic and cultural development. Research governance, ethics, and workload management are key priorities, ensuring inclusivity, transparency, and academic excellence. Future goals focus on further expanding international collaboration, digital transformation, and environmental sustainability.

BSU's mission is to use creativity and innovation to successfully address the key issues of our age. It has its roots in the creativity that underpins a range of disciplines that are the drivers of sustainable economic development, and our excellent teaching and research are intertwined, novel and bold, with strong links between thinking, making and doing.

BSU has a commitment to parity of esteem across all its activities. There are three Career Pathways that most academic staff have aligned to as follows:
- Teaching & Scholarship (T&S - 32%).
- Teaching Scholarship & Research (TSR – 55%).
- Teaching, Scholarship and Knowledge Exchange Enterprise and Employability (TSK3E - 12%).

There is a fluidity between research, knowledge exchange and teaching at BSU through our engaged research approach, and staff are encouraged to move between the pathways as their careers progress. There are clear descriptors and metrics across all three pathways, aligning to our promotion criteria, and staff are provided with a structured programme of support in their chosen pathways from the early career stage through to Reader and Professor. This supports our REF, KEF and TEF agendas, and we are currently undertaking a project to develop best practice case studies on how research underpins our curriculum and external engagement work.

REF
Research publications and creative outputs; projects and awards; creation of new knowledge that moves the discipline forward and creates real world impact, informing the curriculum and our teaching practices

KEF
Sharing our knowledge to engage with external audiences and provide opportunities for staff, students and external stakeholders seeking to engage with the university's expertise

A research engaged university of the future

TEF
Providing excellent, inclusive and innovative teaching programes to challenge our student and staff to realise their talent and thrive, for their own benefit and the wider good

Staff on the TRS career pathway are encouraged to undertake internationally recognised research, and support for the pathway is designed to enable researchers to develop the skills and capabilities that will enable them to work at this level, through career development plans agreed with their line manager. We have an Early-Stage Researcher (ESR) mentor programme in place (47% of ESRs take up this opportunity) and a coaching programme for mid-career researchers. In 2024/25, 18 staff (4% of academic staff) received coaching from experienced UKRI coaches and reported positive impact on their development and practice, and 24 additional staff will receive this opportunity in 2025/26. Both of these programmes, and our Researcher Development Programme (RDP) are open to staff across all three career pathways, recognising the fact that research underpins both our curriculum and our external facing activities, and that staff are encouraged to move between pathways as their careers progress.

Governance of research at Bath Spa is organised as follows, with both formal and informal groups and peer communities informing our research culture and environment:
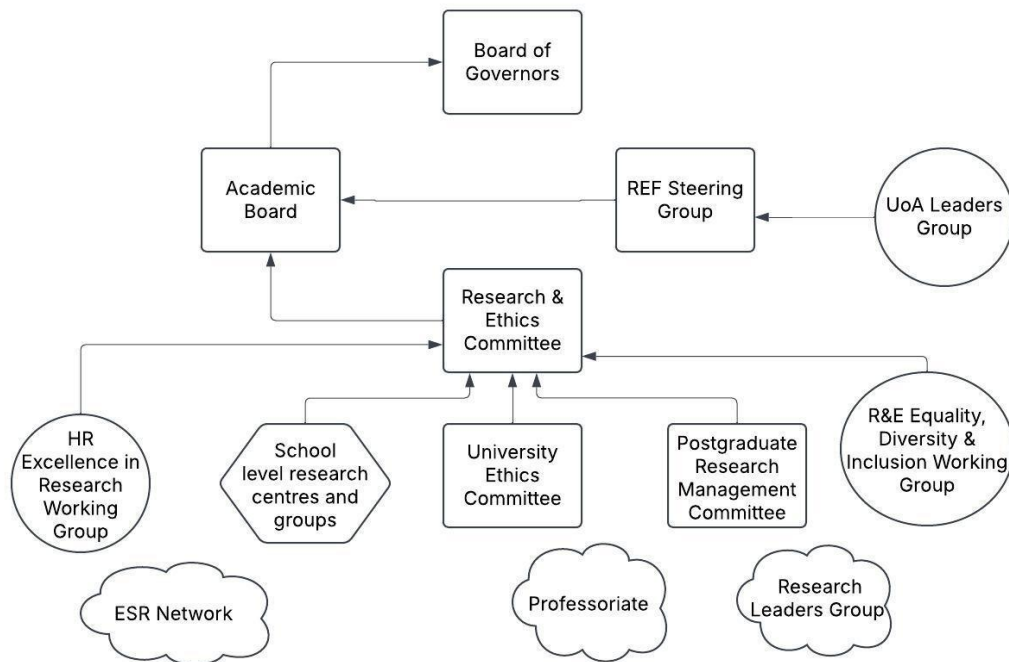
[490 of 500 words]

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)*

Environment and culture

The 2030 Research Strategy is aligned to the overarching strategy for the University and aims to embed research across all our activities. The purpose of the Research Strategy is to focus our research on areas of proven excellence and academic sustainability, and to create a distinctive and internationally recognised profile of innovative research. Our goal is to become a vibrant and well-connected hub for new ideas, without internal boundaries, and with an international reputation for creativity, culture, and enterprise in research. The University's core values of Respect, Inclusivity, Collaboration, and Sustainability are integral to all our research activities and actively underpin our engagement with stakeholders from local, regional, and global communities. This approach will foster a culture of excellence and promote research that highlights our strengths and challenges across disciplinary boundaries.

Research is supported at institutional level, through a range of workshops, activities and events, including a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme, and also through funded activities such as seed funded projects (through HEQR) and a range of impact and engagement projects (though our AHRC Impact Accelerator Award). Our three Institution-wide Strategic Research Centres support interdisciplinary research through a range of initiatives aimed at fostering better research collaboration across the institution.

Research is supported at School level, through their Research Centres and Groups, and through devolved HEQ funding targeted at discipline level needs and requirements.

Employment

BSU is committed to providing a learning, working and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its members are respected, and which is free from discrimination, prejudice, intimidation and all forms of harassment including bullying. We have detailed policies and procedures which we believe support our commitment in this area. We recognise that equality, diversity and inclusion are essential to building the creative, innovative and nurturing ethos that we pride ourselves on, and Inclusion forms one of our four core cultural values alongside Respect, Collaboration and Sustainability.

Support for researchers at various stages is provided through a range of opportunities:

- Fixed-Term and Contract Researchers -through a dedicated peer network and ring-fenced funding made available to them to support their development.
- Early-Stage Researchers – through a peer community network and ESR mentoring scheme
- Mid-Career Researchers – through a bespoke coaching programme aimed at supporting career development and leadership. Delegates are chosen through a competitive application process with clear criteria set for inclusion. A maximum of 25 places are available each year.
- Readers and Professors – through peer community networks and an annual Professoriate.

Equality, diversity and inclusion issues are monitored through a Research & Enterprise Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Working Group (REEDIWG) which reports to both Research & Ethics Committee and to the REF Steering Group.

Professional Development of Researchers

BSU is committed to developing researchers at all career stages, and supporting those who wish to be research active by:

- Monitoring sector wide recommendations for best practice in research culture (e.g. Wellcome Trust, ARMA, UKRI and the Government's R&D Roadmap).
- Embedding an understanding of the importance of impact and public engagement in research practice and recognising the value of professional and creative practice as research.
- Supporting our staff and Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) through our Researcher Development Programme (RDP) and the MA in Professional Practice in HE.
- Providing a mentoring and coaching programme to support researchers at all stages of their career.
- Maintaining our commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat and the HR Excellence in Research Award.

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)*	**Institution** In 2024/25, BSU signed up to two additional externally monitored initiatives to further strengthen our research environment and culture: • Concordat for Sustainability in Research – with a clear action plan being developed to lay out our commitment to this area in line with this University core values. • Technicians Commitment – to recognise and value the contributions made by this key research enabling community. Our work in monitoring the range of additional Concordats and regulatory frameworks is ongoing and includes: • <u>Concordat to Support Research Integrity</u> – regular monitoring against our action plan and the development of a range of tools and resources including a new policy on <u>GenAI in Research</u> . • Concordat on Open Research – update in policy to align to the new requirements of REF2029. • Concordat on Public Engagement – the development of a new Public Engagement Toolkit for staff. • Knowledge Exchange Concordat – responsibility has now moved to the Centre for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, and a new Head of KE has been appointed to take this work forward. **Academic Managers of Researchers** Research Leaders come together three times a year to discuss university wide initiatives that impact on our research environment and culture – this year the focus has been on the response to our Research Culture survey and on developing our process and procedures for identifying staff that are Significantly Responsible for Research for REF2029 purposes.

The Professoriate met in the Spring of 2025 and discussed how research, knowledge exchange and teaching are interconnected, and can strengthen the curriculum, research environment and externally facing activities of the university.

Researchers

In 2023/24, the University ran a local version of the Culture, Employment, and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) which is a national survey designed to gather anonymous data about working conditions, employment policies and practices, research culture, and career and professional development support for research staff, academic staff, and research leaders in higher education institutions (HEIs).

The REEDIWG undertook an analysis of the results in relation to protected characteristics, and while the sample was not large enough to complete a comprehensive analysis, a number of key trends emerged that demand action, including issues around poor line management, discrimination, bullying and harassment, particularly in protected characteristic groups.

Further work has been undertaken to explore the experiences of staff who do not feel comfortable disclosing information, and to address these issues of concern, and an Action Plan has been developed by the REEDIWG group, and measures for improvement identified. This was monitored against the 2024/25 survey, with some small areas of progress identified in some areas. This is illustrated in the graph below:
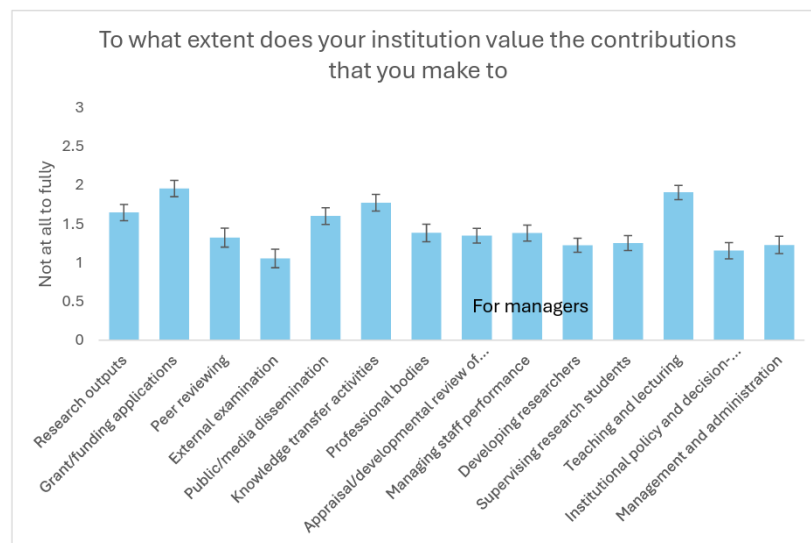
Figure 4. Answers to the questions "to what extent does your institution value the contributions that you make to" (ranging from 0 not at all to 3 fully)

Improvements include the acknowledgement and sense of value for success in research, which have been supported by:

- The launch of a Research Instagram site and a LinkedIn page which has highlighted the individual successes of researchers.
- The development of posters and promotional materials showcasing research success at the annual Research Festival.
- Publishing news stories regularly across the University SharePoint channels.

The REEDIWG group will be working with the PVCRE to identify resources to support issues of equality and inclusion in relation to research environment and culture as part of our preparations for REF2029.

[523 words of 600]

Employment (max 600 words)

Institution

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) continues to Chair a range of groups to ensure that considerations around research staff workloads and development are incorporated across wider university workstreams and initiatives and Research Office staff

are represented on a range of University Committees and Groups including the Workload Planning Steering group; Equality & Diversity Steering Group; Promotions Working Group and the Career Pathways Group.

The Research & Enterprise Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Working Group (REEDIWG) led a number of initiatives in 2024/25 including the development of the SRR process for REF2029; the response to the Culture & Environment Survey; and discussions with disabled and global majority staff relating to EDI issues relating to the promotions round. Representation on the REEDIWG is drawn from a range of career stages, staff EDI groups, and representatives from HR, and has been a key forum to address these issues and to make recommendations for change. For example, guidance for staff and managers on maximising research time within the working year has been developed, and the Significantly Responsible for Research processes for REF 2029 have been through a thorough consultation process and have now been implemented.

Academic Managers of Researchers

The first cohort of the mid-career leadership and personal and professional development coaching programme was successfully completed in 2024/25, with very positive evaluations and evidence of impact on individual's personal development. The second cohort has now been launched and a peer community group set up which will be launched with a workshop on core leadership skills (identified as a need across the group).

The seed funding programme was revised for 2024/25 to provide staff with the opportunity to develop, plan and manage a larger scale project, and as a result of this, a wide range of opportunities were created for UG, PGT and PGR students to benefit from paid research positions, and for the staff involved to gain valuable management experience. Initial evaluation of the programme is that the funding will lead to a range of externally funded bids, impact evidence, wider collaborations, and published outputs and creative practice activities.

	HEQR seed fund pump-priming investment since 2021/22 has contributed to the submission of over £12M of externally funded bids, with £2.73M awarded to date. ### Researchers We continue to support our researcher community with internal peer networks, coaching opportunities (for contract researchers) and a mentoring scheme (for all Early-Stage Researchers). This academic year we launched a range of public and community engagement and impact coaching and training initiatives, which have demonstrably led to a greater understanding of how to embed inclusive and meaningful co-created and participatory research practices into staff research. A range of case studies are being developed to share good practice in this area. *[450 of 600 words]*
Professional development *(max 600 words)*	### Institution The RSO continues to run a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme under the Leadership of a Senior Lecturer, and this role was extended to Full-Time in the academic year 2024/25, funded by HEQR. The programme has been co-developed with Research Leaders and Higher Degree Tutors to meet the needs of staff in specific discipline areas, as well as the needs of Postgraduate Research students, and draws on expertise form a range of central departments such as colleagues in the Library, in HR and in Student Services. Each School has Research Centres and Groups in place, which support school-led activities, and provide a peer-community for researchers working across similar research areas to come together and share their work. Activities and events include lecture series, conferences and workshops, writing retreats and creative practice forums. PGRs are embedded within these groups and are fully included in the activities, with funded work experience in support of conferences and events and school-based research projects made available wherever possible. School devolved HEQR supports these activities, and many of the Schools

have put their own seed funding schemes in place to develop the research environment and culture at a local level.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Each Academic School is represented on the Research & Ethics Committee (REC) and is required to develop a Research & Enterprise Plan at the start of the year, against which they are evaluated, with a formal report on activities required at the end of each academic year. This informs the use of their devolved HEQR income, and the plans set out a strategy for how this income supports school-level research environment and culture activities. School Governance structures monitor the activities of local research centres and groups, and this work is reported on in the annual plan and showcased as part of our annual Research Festival, and our annual research report.

Representation on REC and presenting the range of work at university wide events provides a platform for academic managers of research to develop their leadership skills.

Management of devolved HEQR funding also provides additional financial and people management skills to this staff community, mentored by their Heads of School.

Researchers

Individual staff continue to have access to the wide range of training and development provided by the RDP, as well as discipline specific training provided at School level.

HEQR devolved funding managed by the School Research leads continues to be available to support researchers, including: Seed-funded projects; Support for Research Centres and Groups; Conference attendance for those presenting papers at disciplinary level; training and development; and support for creative practice based exhibitions and events.

The Research Development Programme (RDP) supports initiatives that priorities the well-being and professional development of all researchers, especially those at early stages of their career, and there is ongoing dialogue through Research & Ethics Committee,

| | REEDIWG and with our Research Leads group (which meets with the PVCRE and Head of the Research Office on a termly basis) to discuss issues around workload and equitable access to promotion and developmental opportunities.

[503 of 600 words] |

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)*

The range of issues identified within the responses to the Culture and Environment survey both in 2023/24 and 2024/25 have highlighted that staff still find it difficult to balance teaching duties with time and space to develop their research. Our approach to REF2029 has therefore been modified to reflect that whilst we do not have the capacity to support all our staff at the significant level that is required for the research excellence framework, we are a research-engaged university, with a fluidity between research, knowledge exchange and teaching , with staff encouraged to move between the pathways as their careers progress.

At Bath Spa, this is therefore a developmental journey, with staff supported to develop their research profile and activities over a number of years.

This approach to how we prepare for REF, has enabled us to curate our research strategy across the broad range of areas, and to focus on how we support research in all shapes and forms, using it to underpin our core strategic aim of placing teaching and learning at the heart of what we do, whilst reaffirming our commitment to research, knowledge exchange, teaching and scholarship and demonstrating how the three are interconnected at every level.

The Concordat Action Plan for the next three years therefore focuses on how we can support research in a more equitable and inclusive way, recognising the importance of maintaining work-life balance and a positive sense of mental health and well-being across our academic community. Measures of success will be in improved results from our annual culture and environment survey, and a breadth of good practice case studies which demonstrate the inter-connectivity of our research. Initiatives that are being put in place to support this include:

- A research project led by the RSO scoping where research underpins the curriculum, leading to the development of a range of good practice case studies across each academic schools to highlight this.

- A suite of promotional materials across the campus that will include posters highlighting our most significant and impactful research and where this is linked to programme and curriculum development.
- A range of evidence of how research at Bath Spa impacts the wider world and our external communities, which can be used in support of our REF and External Engagement Strategies.

The REEDIWG is also committed to understanding and addressing issues related to bullying, harassment and discrimination across our staff communities, and working with HR and with the Equality and Diversity Steering group to put a range of actions in place to mitigate against these. This will include a collaborative approach to EDI training for managers and will support the Workload Planning Steering Group with training and development around good practice in annual appraisal and in joining up these developmental issues with workload planning discussions.

[462 of 500 words]

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

Our key objectives for the 2025/26 academic year align to our 3-year forward looking plan for the Concordat, with a focus around the following actions:

- Continue to reinforce the links between TEF/KEF and REF, and to show the value of research to the university. This will include the development of case studies for each school highlighting how research underpins our curriculum and showcasing these through a range of promotional activities.
- Continue to raise awareness of the Concordat and raise its profile as well as other sector wide research initiatives.
- Provide more extensive opportunities for staff to meet together to engage with their research, and to showcase this more widely across the university.
- A university wide effort to be put in place to address these issues of mental health and wellbeing centred around workload management practices. REEDIWG will continue to identify positive actions that can be put in place to support staff from protected characteristic groups, and to embed these within our policy and practice.
- Continue to focus on raising awareness of opportunities that exist for staff to develop their research careers. The Research Support Office will work closely with HR and the Workload Planning (WLP) Steering Group to address these issues and to ensure that annual Staff Development Reviews

are aligned to WLP discussions. This includes a need for better training and development for managers.

- Strengthen engagement and take-up of personal and professional development and training across the University, by working with Research Leads in schools to embed discipline specific training into school level activities.
- Work within the Research Support Office more widely to support events and activities that will bring research staff together to discuss their work and develop collaborate projects, as well as encouraging more informal mentoring and providing opportunities for coaching and leadership training.
- Continue to develop our communities of practice across the following areas:
  - Early-Stage Researchers
  - Mid-Career Researchers and emerging/future research leaders
  - Research Leaders
  - Research Supervisors
  - Staff on Fixed-Term Research Contracts
  - PGR students – both at School and University level
- Collaborate with HR on embedding the Researcher Development Programme and associated culture and environment workshops within the new Learning & Development system and developing robust evaluation methodologies into this provision to monitor the impact of our programmes. This includes gathering appropriate metrics for REF2029 purposes.

[385 of 500 words]

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 annual plan has been informed by the review of the Concordat Action Plan undertaken by the HR Excellence in Research Working Group. It was considered and approved by Research & Ethics Committee on 1 October 2025 and Academic Board on 5 November 2025. It was approved by the Board of Governors on 10 December 2025.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

JGlasspool

Contact for queries: Ms Sarah Priston

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.