

HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) – Summary Report (2026 submission)

1) Overview

Since renewing its HR Excellence in Research Award in 2023, LSE has continued to support a broad and impactful research community spanning areas such as democracy, inequality, climate change, organisational behaviour and AI, all contributing to the School's mission of improving society through research.

LSE's Concordat action plan focuses on research and policy staff, including research assistants, officers, fellows and policy fellows, supported by senior academic leaders and professional services teams across HR, Research and Innovation, the PhD Academy and LSE Careers.

Concordat activity is closely aligned with the Research for the World Strategy, which prioritises research excellence, impact and influence, and a strong research environment. This ensures researcher development is embedded within LSE's wider commitment to an inclusive, collaborative and thriving research culture.

2) Governance: Coordinating and Delivering Concordat Work

The **Research and Policy Staff Committee (RPSC)** is a sub-committee of the Appointments Committee with delegated responsibility for professional development and support for research and policy staff, and for implementing the **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**. The RPSC meets termly to discuss and where appropriate, take actions on career progression, wellbeing, research culture, and career developmental matters. The RPSC coordinates Concordat work, with overall responsibility shared between HR (Organisational Learning & Development) and Research & Innovation, senior leadership (Pro-Vice Chancellor Research (PVC-R), Pro-Vice Chancellor Faculty Development (PFC-FD), Vice Chair of the Appointments Committee (VCAC), Director R&I, HR Director), research staff reps, Early Career Researcher (ECR) reps, UCU (University and College Union), Careers, Library, Eden Centre for Education Enhancement, PhD Academy, Centre Managers' Forum, Research Centre Directors' Forum.

Concordat work is closely integrated with LSE's broader institutional strategy and frameworks:

- Research for the World Strategy: Concordat activity directly supports the three aforementioned workstreams.
- Open Access and Research Integrity: The strengthened Open Access policy, revised Code of Research Conduct, and UKRIO Research Integrity training rollout align with the Concordat's research integrity obligations.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: EDI funding streams reflect LSE's commitment to an inclusive research environment.
- Research Excellence Framework (REF) and LSE Shaping the World Strategy: Concordat obligations are connected to REF environment expectations and LSE's broader civic and scholarly mission.
- Research Culture Initiatives: The Impact Hub, Summer of Research Culture Projects, and Open Research Community demonstrate institutional investment in a positive research environment beyond compliance.

3) Internal Evaluation: Approach to Gap Analysis

As part of LSE's commitment to the Concordat, the RPSC and its Working Group collaborated to gather feedback and insights on the researcher lifecycle at the School.

Approach to evaluation and instruments:

- **Training Needs Analysis 2024-2025 (TNA):** A survey disseminated to all research and policy track staff assessed awareness and relevance of the Concordat; relevant institutional policies and REF awareness; the experience of line manager and career development support (e.g. LSE's Career Development Review process, Mentoring support). Key findings relevant to our 2023-26 HREiR action plan included: 1) that awareness of the Concordat was low (28%) although 80% of respondents judged the Concordat relevant after review. 2) That awareness of key institutional policies (e.g., LSE's IP or grant policies) was uneven.
- **Staff Survey for all LSE Staff (June 2024) analysis by category:** Analysis by research category identified strengths in flexibility, pride and care for LSE's future, development priorities and weaker areas included job security, change management, enablement, reward/recognition, and line management. Free-text responses highlighted precarity, workload pressures, equipment/space, and pay competitiveness.
- **TNA Pulse survey for research and policy staff (Jan 2026):** Agreeing to combine questions from the past TNA, CEDARS, and other internal surveys, the RPSC Working Group delivered a short pulse survey to reduce fatigue and potentially increase response rates. Findings highlighted a strong demand for leadership, management, project management, AI/data skills, and communication training. Respondents also indicated a variation in line management and mentoring experiences, and a need for more consistent career development support. Around 57% of respondents spent only 1–4 CPD days in the past year, suggesting that active signposting of the 10-day entitlement (introduced following 2024–25 TNA findings) has not fully translated into increased uptake.

Stakeholder consultation and engagement

Researchers, managers of researchers, and key stakeholders from research support functions, including LSE Careers, HR, the Eden Centre, and Research Centre Directors were consulted when forming the TNA and the more recent pulse survey, to ensure the survey questions reflected all areas of research development.

The RPSC discusses the Concordat as standing item in its termly meetings and includes representation from the ECR Network, ensuring research-staff voices are embedded in governance. ECR representatives were directly consulted during the gap analysis process. Stakeholder discussions helped link evaluation findings to LSE's research development priorities and shaped the selection of obligations for the 2026–29 action plan

4) Past Progress, Achievements, and Lessons Learned (2023-2026)

Across the 2023-26 cycle, LSE has made clear progress in embedding Concordat principles within its research environment. A key feature of this cycle has been the use of evaluation and feedback to shape delivery: ECR feedback on isolation and limited cross-centre networking led to the introduction (in 2024) of a new Induction and Refresher Event for New and Continuing Research and Policy staff, which

focuses on community-building as well as pointing researchers to relevant policies and supports. Researcher concerns raised in RISE (Research & Innovation Sessions) workshops about mentoring accessibility resulted in the mentoring training pilot being rescheduled to more suitable points in the academic year and reframed as a pathway to supervision and leadership skills. Union and staff-rep input at RPSC raised the visibility of precarity, contributing to the prioritisation of support for career development, promotion, and reduced risk of redundancy in the forward-looking strategy. The introduction of our Mid-Career Academic Coaching Programme (2025) was a direct response to identified demand for personalised career development support. Its success led to the introduction of two additional specialised coaching programmes, for research and policy staff, in early 2026. Supported through LSE's Enhancing Research Culture Fund allocation, the programmes together mark a significant investment in staff career development, and have received consistent, positive feedback. The Promotions Roadshow for Research and Policy Staff, piloted in February 2026, was itself a direct response to feedback from staff that progression criteria were opaque. The PVC-FD and VCAC are also undertaking a redesign of the promotions process for Research and Policy staff, focusing on greater consistency of assessment by having all cases submitted in each term considered together by an expert panel, greater impartiality and quality of referees, more review of staff outputs, and adding a process for the consideration of Individual Circumstances. In our Backwards Action Plan, we were able to evidence good progress and identify areas for development in the following areas:

New institutional opportunities

- We strengthened our Open Access policy & established the Open Research Community.
- AI guidance covering Education, Research, and Legal/Regulatory dimensions was launched. We created internal funding opportunities (e.g., EDI funding, UKRI Funding scheme, Seed Research, Bridging, Innovation and Urgency funds) supporting research excellence and culture projects.
- A revised Code of Research Conduct is underway, UKRIO Research Integrity training is being rolled out to further promote research ethics and integrity in research and academic staff.

Managers of researchers

10 development days entitlement of researcher staff was actively signposted, the LSE Leadership Framework launched- embedding a shared standard of good leadership for research leads and heads of departments. Promotions Roadshow for Research and Policy Staff were piloted February 2026 to demystify progression criteria.

Researchers' career development

The ECR Network's Changemakers Programme funded four peer-led projects in the 2023-24 academic year and two projects in the 2024-25 academic year, which explored and made recommendations to strengthen the lived experiences of ECRs at the School. The findings highlighted the value of mentoring, the provision of dedicated writing time, a consolidated hub of information for ECRs, and greater support for the professional and career development of ECRs. The RISE programme which is open to all academic, research and policy staff and advertised as such, covered funding, application design, ethics, open research, and impact and innovation, supported by a virtual knowledge hub. The annual Research and Policy Staff Induction relaunched as a community-building and networking event for new starters and existing staff. The researcher mentoring training pilot received good qualitative feedback despite low initial sign-ups. In terms of next steps, mentoring training will be re-offered at more suitable times during the academic year and be reframed as a pathway to supervision and leadership skills. External leadership programme like Aurora (Advance HE) will continue to be promoted to research staff.

Challenges and lessons

This cycle has reinforced the importance of moving beyond provision alone, by regularly checking in with members of the researcher community to understand their evolving needs, and ensuring that support for research and policy staff is visible, accessible, and consistently embedded across the researcher lifecycle. Job security, leaders listening, and researcher engagement remain areas for improvement, with solutions being evaluated and implemented by the RPSC and Working Group ongoingly.

Structural barriers for project-funded staff that are the same across the sector (funder cost rules and workload intensity) require institutional solutions (bridging support, ring-fenced time) alongside individual development offers. Survey fatigue has caused low TNA response rates, where we have tried to introduce the 2026 pulse format and networking-style events (breakfasts, lunch & learns) to improve reach and engagement from 2026. Overall, our evaluation has demonstrated opportunities for 2026-29 around increasing engagement with professional development opportunities, and improving the consistency of management and career development support for research and policy staff.

5) Forward Strategy for the next 3 years (2026-2029)

The 2026–29 Concordat action plan builds directly on the lessons of the previous cycle. It is both a continuation of successful activity and a targeted response to the gaps identified through institutional evaluation. At the same time, the plan supports delivery of LSE’s Research for the World Strategy by strengthening the research environment, supporting research excellence, and enhancing the impact and influence of the School’s research.

Vision for change

Over the next three years, LSE aims to create a research environment in which research and policy staff are supported to thrive at all career stages. This will be characterised by increased engagement with professional development, more consistent management practice, and stronger support for career progression and transitions. Central to this vision is enabling researchers to make informed choices about their careers and to engage confidently with opportunities both within and beyond academia. LSE’s Concordat Forward Action Plan is rooted in identified gaps and evaluated outcomes from the previous cycle. For instance, LSE is committed to supporting researchers through professional development programmes such as RISE and academic, research, and policy staff coaching programmes.

The 2026-29 plan will be governed through RPSC and delivered by OL&D, the RPSC Working Group, and R&I. The obligations we are focusing on are:

A Summary of the Obligations in LSE’s Concordat Forward Action Plan and reasons for choosing those obligations:

Pillar	Obligations	Reason for inclusion
Environment & Culture	1.Wellbeing and mental health, 2.Equality Diversity and Inclusion, 3.Research Integrity,	Workload pressure and work-life balance concerns were consistently raised by research-only staff across the 2024–25 TNA and June 2024 Staff Survey, making Wellbeing and Mental Health a clear priority. Equality and inclusion gaps identified through the RPSC and ECR Network, particularly around the experiences of fixed-term and early career staff underpin the focus on EDI . The Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the ongoing UKRIO training rollout make Research Integrity a timely and strategically important obligation.
Employment	1.Recognition, Reward & Promotion 2.People Management 3.Job Security	Job security was the top concern for research staff in the June 2024 Staff Survey, with precarity and workload pressure recurring throughout free-text responses. This obligation drives improvements to redeployment processes and the R&I Bridging Fund for fixed-term staff. People Management is prioritised in direct

		response to weaker Staff Survey scores on management quality, with a focus on building line manager capability and consistency. Recognition, Reward and Promotion addresses staff feedback that progression criteria are opaque, a concern directly responded to through the Promotions Roadshow piloted in February 2026.
Professional & Career Dev.	1.Championing Professional Development 2.Career Development Support and Planning	The 2026 Pulse TNA found that 57% of respondents spent only 1–4 CPD days in the past year, alongside strong demand for more structured and consistent career development support. Championing Professional Development responds to this directly, building on the success of the Mid-Career Academic Coaching Programme and the newly launched Research and Policy Career Coaching programmes to provide more personalised, career-stage-appropriate support. Career Development Support and Planning reflects the importance of preparing researchers for a range of trajectories, within and beyond academia, in line with the Concordat’s emphasis on enabling informed career choices.

Monitoring and reporting

The forward plan aligns with LSE’s Research for the World Strategy and broader workforce development priorities. Progress will be monitored through a combination of annual surveys, programme evaluation, and governance oversight. A RAG-rated tracker aligned to Research Strategy workstreams and Concordat obligations is reviewed termly by RPSC and annually shared to the Appointments Committee. Termly ‘You said, we did’ summaries are included in RPSC meeting minutes and shared to committee research and policy staff members. Progress against KPIs is reported annually to Council, ensuring Concordat activity remains embedded in LSE’s highest institutional governance structures.

6. Conclusion

LSE’s approach to the Concordat over the 2026–29 period reflects a clear progression from the previous cycle. It is grounded in evidence, informed by researcher voice, and aligned with institutional strategy. By focusing on development, management, and career progression, the School will continue to foster a research environment that is inclusive, supportive, and enabling, supporting researchers to thrive and to contribute fully to LSE’s mission of advancing knowledge and shaping the world through research.