

Our research community and researchers are involved in shaping the University's new strategy through a variety of pathways. These include:

- Continued representation of research staff on Senate

- A repositioned Research Staff Association

- Research staff-focused personal and professional development opportunities in a variety of domains

The Graduate School acts as a focal hub for Concordat-related activity offering researchers a point of contact, sign-posting, careers, development and wellbeing support. The priority for the Graduate School has been to support research staff and staff supporting and managing researchers (e.g., MoRs) in understanding strategic changes and new priorities. With our new live

Improved internal review processes for grant proposals and funding applications (from research staff)

- Increased involvement in research-related activities in the University
- Mentoring initiatives for research staff (as both mentor and mentee)
- Improved support for researchers in one College (more networking opportunities with academics; more fruitful communication between research groups)

These have directly influenced both short-term (e.g., focus groups; workshops on funding applications) and long-term actions (e.g., regular election of research staff to Senate).

In 2023, the University ran the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) which had a 54% response rate (28% doctoral researchers; 72% members of staff out of which 28% aligned themselves with the 'research-only contract job family'). The survey generated several responses which directly influenced current and future action plans, with one respondent declaring,

managers and research leaders in the University. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) and other strategic research leaders attend the Network's meetings and share work in progress to contribute to an open and transparent exchange of ideas and information.

However, we have also experienced challenges. A recurring issue at Brunel is that research staff are often excluded from the academic staff sphere, even though they consider themselves to be aligned with that staff group. That includes not being invited to academic staff events, meetings, and networking spaces, or being left out of critical email communications about fellowship announcements and other career advancement opportunities. Therefore, it is an ongoing priority to influence a shift in culture around this institutional behaviour, and to facilitate stronger representation, affiliation and a greater sense of belonging amongst research staff. Turning the Research Staff Association into an official staff network, aligned with all other central university staff networks is an important step in that direction, and will result in their formal and automatic consultation on a wider range of issues. Similarly, a revamped research-staff@brunel.ac.uk mailing list complements our central academic-staff@brunel.ac.uk mailing list and is actively promoted as a means of including research staff in critical communications.

Your strategic objectives and implementation plan

Brunel continues to value its Concordat work. Prior to the changes described above (cf. Institutional Context), our former Vice-Chancellor Prof Julia Buckingham was Concordat Champion at Brunel, having chaired the 2019 UK Concordat review and the national Athena Swan review. Therefore, the integration of the Concordat into discussion and policy change at the University is fairly well embedded and is reflected in the priorities, actions and success measures planned for 2024-2027:

- **Brunel Research Culture Seed Fund** (£15,000 total value) for Research Staff and Technicians to encourage those groups to lead projects that contribute to fostering an inclusive and collaborative research culture at Brunel (3).
- **Research Staff Association** to be formerly recognised as a Staff Network, aligned with Organisational Development and other institutional staff networks (1).
- **Partnership** between research fellows at TWI in Cambridge and on campus to increase networking and exchange of ideas among peers (3).
- Implement outcomes from the focus group for research staff held in November 2023 to ensure **greater integration in the academic community** in Brunel (1) (2).
- **Postdoc Symposium** in April 2024, with a focus on fellowship and grant application training (which has been identified as a key priority) and presentation skills (3).
- **Early Career Academic and Researcher Development Programme**, a programme piloted with academic staff in 2021 is now also inclusive of rese