

Terms of Reference, September 2024

The Early Career Researcher (ECR) Sub-Committee reports up to the University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC). Its scope is to ensure the University's adherence to the Researcher Development Concordat and the maintenance of Sussex's HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award.

The Concordat is a collaborative agreement involving key stakeholders — Institutions, Managers, Researchers, and Funders — with the aim of enhancing employment conditions and fostering the career advancement of researchers across the UK. The HREiR Award is an acknowledgment of an institution's commitment to fostering a conducive and supportive research culture, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and innovation. The University of Sussex has held the HREiR Award since 2013 and formally committed to the Concordat in 2021.

The ECR Sub-Committee is entrusted with developing policies, practices and initiatives aligned with the HREiR Action Plan. This plan is designed to bolster support for ECRs and align with the University of Sussex Strategic Framework.

Terms of Reference

- (a) To manage, monitor and report on the University's commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat and HR Excellence in Research Award;
- (b) To help develop policies, practices and initiatives to support ECRs in line with the agreed HREiR Action Plan and the Sussex Strategic Framework, including induction, training and development opportunities, working conditions, and the management of ECRs;
- (c) To escalate and resolve issues raised by the ECR community through their ECR Representatives, following the University governance structure;
- (d) To oversee the institution's biennial participation in the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), analysing the feedback, taking appropriate steps where concerns are raised, and monitoring institutional responses;
- (e) To advocate for improved conditions and a positive research culture for ECRs at Sussex;
- (f) To celebrate ECR successes, championing contributions to the institution's research culture and standing.

Responsibilities

1. ECR Sub-Committee members meet each term, following the ECR Representatives meeting and prior to each formal URIC meeting.
2. Members are asked to actively engage with the HREiR Action Plan and identify opportunities for ECRs to support their career development within their Schools or departments.
3. Members are asked to support the Sussex Researcher School (SRS) in obtaining data and feedback to monitor and evaluate Action Plan success measures/targets.
4. Members are asked to promote SRS Researcher Development events, and the training and development programme for ECRs.

5. Members are expected to notify the Chair and Secretary in a timely manner when they are unable to attend a meeting, offering a written update if they have something to share with the Sub-Committee.
6. Members are expected to be mindful of the core values of kindness, integrity, inclusion and collaboration, in line with the Dignity and Respect policy and the Inclusive Sussex strategy.

Membership

ECR Sub-Committee
Ex Officio
Director for Early Career Researchers (Chair)
Researcher Development Manager (Secretary)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research
One Associate Dean for Research and Innovation
Assistant Director of HR
Director of Research and Innovation Services
All School ECR Leads or equivalent
ECR Reps x 2 (Acting Chair and Proceeding Chair)
EDI Representative
One Senior Research Manager ¹
One academic elected Senator
In Attendance
Researcher Development Coordinator (Minute Secretary)

Definition of ECR

The University defines 'early career researcher' as staff on a research-only contract at grades 6-8, broadly encompassing research assistants, postdoctoral researchers and research fellows.

We recognise that this includes researchers with a wide range of experiences, including:

- Different disciplinary backgrounds
- Varying levels of training
- A variety of different experiences and responsibilities
- Different types of contract (fixed or open-ended, full- or part-time)
- Diverse career expectations

To note:

- The terms of elected offices will align with institutional practice and be capped at three years, and a maximum of two terms per individual.
- Delegates will not normally be permitted for one-off absences. Where an *ex officio* member of the Board is unable to attend on a regular basis, a formal delegate may be permitted by the Chair, in which case any voting rights will pass to the delegate.

¹ Membership between the four Senior Research Managers to be reviewed annually.

Committee Management

Secretary

Katy Stoddard, Researcher Development Manager (SRS)

Minute Secretary

Shin-Yu Tseng, Researcher Development Coordinator (SRS)

Quorum

50% of voting members

Frequency of meetings

Three times a year, once each term

Reports to

University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC)