

University summary and background

The University of Lincoln has been named as the Modern University of the Year in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021. The University is rated TEF Gold – the highest standard possible – for the quality of its teaching. Its award-winning approach to working with industry has forged connections with blue chip organisations which creates exciting opportunities for students and graduates.

The University's key research themes include rurality, health & wellbeing, sustainability, digitalisation, communities and heritage which represent both our current strengths and future areas of opportunity. They embody a unique set of areas that key into our goals as a civic university undertaking internationally significant research with local relevance, but also with our aspiration to become both thought leaders and researchers engaged in the pursuit of excellence.

Through our research, we strive to change society for the better - whether that is connecting individuals and communities through shared local heritage or contributing to international efforts to address global grand challenges such as climate change.

We create opportunities for all members of our community to get involved and contribute to their university. We value new ideas and we adapt and develop as the community grows and changes. As One Community, we are comprised of individuals with a range of different experiences, identities, and cultures. We thrive as a community because of our diversity and it is through exploring novel and different ideas together that we can understand our world better. We support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, framing our research and collaborations in ways that can contribute to delivering peace and prosperity for people and planet.

The University has approximately 2,400 employees and over 14,000 students. Currently there are 889 academics and 538 Postgraduate research students. Academics are based in the four Colleges: Arts, Lincoln International Business School, Science and Social Science. There are 26 Schools that sit within the four Colleges. Lincoln continues to grow rapidly, supporting the needs of our society and our economy and now boasts a full suite of health care education including a medical school which launched in 2019 in collaboration with the University of Nottingham. At full capacity, it will train over 400 undergraduate medical students a year, with a purpose-built new medical school building opening in 2021.

At the University of Lincoln all academics (up to Associate Professor) have the same contractual obligations. Within this contract two role profile pathways exist – Teaching and Research (T&R), and Teaching, Scholarship and Professional Practice (TSPP). These role profiles allow an increased focus on specific areas of activity for individuals to ensure we achieve our strategic aims as a university. Both the TR and TSPP role profiles are expected to deliver excellent teaching and assessment and contribute to our outstanding student experience, and to carry out citizenship and administrative activities. The TSPP role profile has been developed for individuals who have a focus on scholarship and/or professional practice, alongside their teaching. The TR role profile has been developed for individuals who have a focus on research alongside their teaching. Both profiles have the same promotion opportunities but with different

criteria and output expectations. Outputs and activities within the role profiles are very varied and should result in quality outputs. Level and impact of activity vary but are expected to align with seniority of role – for example an Associate Professor would be expected to carry out activities which impact at national and international context for some areas, and a Professor should be involved in international leadership and a strong international profile. As of the 21st September 2020 there are currently 385 academics on the T&R profile and 505 academics on the TSPP profile. There are currently 109 employees on research only contracts at the University. These researchers have the following job titles: Research Assistant, Research Fellow, Instrument Scientist, Senior Research Fellow and Principal Research Fellow. Postgraduate researchers, employees on research only contracts and early career researchers on both the T&R and TSPP profiles are the intended audience of ongoing engagement, consultation, development opportunities and the action plan for the Vitae Researcher Development Concordat.

Gap analysis and action plan

The gap analysis was conducted between March and September 2020. Throughout this time there was a thorough examination of processes and practices across the University, including support available for researchers (both staff and students). The gap analysis was conducted by the HR and Research & Enterprise departments, with contributions from other areas including Colleges, the Doctoral School, Eleanor Glanville Centre, Lincoln Academy of Learning and Teaching and others. Senior leadership including the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation and the College Directors of Research were engaged throughout the University and College Research Committees.

Academics and students were invited to contribute to this exercise through the Vitae Concordat Development of Researchers Working Group and a survey that was widely circulated in August 2020. The survey conducted was based on the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) with the intention that the University of Lincoln would participate in CEDARS going forward and the data collected in 2020 could be benchmarked in consequent years. The survey had 83 completed responses, which is a 9% response rate out of the total of academics. There were 25 academics from a cross section of the University and an array of levels of experience and roles that attended the virtual Vitae Concordat working groups. There have been three working group meetings to date from July through September 2020. The members of the working group helped shape the survey that was run by HR and Research and Enterprise and the members played a key role in circulating the survey to colleagues. There were breakout sessions in each working group to discuss principles of the Concordat, feedback to the rest of the group and contributed in shaping the action plan by stressing the priorities of the members. The responses of the survey also informed the gap analysis and action plan, as it highlighted some areas to focus on improvement. For example, 71% of respondents at the University have said that during the last 12 months they spent approximately six days or less on professional development activities. This is comparable to the sector average as 78.6% of CROS 2019 respondents said that during the last 12 months they spent approximately 6 days or less on professional development activities.

Going forward it is the intention to continue and expand the membership of the working group. The aim is to continue the working group on a quarterly basis and encourage more Post Graduate Researchers to attend. The next working group meetings will be scheduled for November 2020 and January/February 2021. These groups will be held to confer ongoing progress of the action plan and will incorporate discussions around plans, suggestions and decision making. This group will also continue ongoing discussions based on the principles of the Concordat and will be essential in circulating the CEDARS 2021.

The gap analysis, survey and engagement through the working groups have highlighted that there are some inconsistencies in practices around the University and some improvements to be made which are mostly around communication and ensuring that good practice and support is widely shared with researchers, both staff and students. The engagement that has led to the creation of the action plan has featured that there is a lot of good practice occurring across the University and many of the actions are based around joining links across departments.

Key activities will continue around the University to raise awareness of the Vitae Researcher Development Concordat, improve networks and remove any potential barriers to development and support. The University will continue to update the action plan in order to evidence compliance of the principles of the Concordat. Updates on the action plan will be reported and reviewed by senior leaders in the University and College Research Committees, this will ensure best practice and maintaining compliance with the principles of the Concordat.

Structure and governance

The University of Lincoln is committed to engaging with Concordat and ensure all principles are embedded to support the career development of researchers. Actions to improve support for researchers have been identified and developed through the gap analysis, working group and survey.

There are three levels of research committees to ensure accountability and researcher representation on decision making committees across the University. Each School has a School Director of Research that contributes to the College Research Committees. The College Research Committees are led by the four College Directors of Research that gather information on the research environment which are College specific. College Directors of Research attend the University Research Committee in order to represent the local research areas and at a strategic level. The University Research Committee is chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation.

Annual reports of progress will be produced in relation to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Research Staff action plan for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), University Research Committee and relevant staff working groups. The Vitae Concordat group currently has membership of 24 researchers at various stages of their research careers, including PGR students. When more working group meetings are diarised, they will be widely publicised again to encourage a wider membership. The Vitae Concordat working group has been vital to formulating the action plan through group consultation, providing advice on actions and disseminating information

to their local areas, including the survey conducted in August 2020. Going forward it is the intention to continue to consult with the Vitae Concordat working group through quarterly meetings. The action plan will continue to develop throughout these conversations as we will be sense checking new actions, gathering information on progress from local areas to learn and make adaptations to the action plan, as well as requesting contributions to decision making processes at local and strategic levels.

Progress on the action plan is to be a standing agenda item to be formally reviewed at the University Research Committee. Updates will be provided in various forms of communication such as a review in the Board of Governors Annual Report, discussion with Trade Unions at the Joint Consultative Committee, the HR Line newsletter that is circulated to all employees and the Staff News page which is on the internal website.

Progress and responses to the gap analysis and action plan are informed by research group networks, the University and school Athena SWAN Action Plans, progress on the Race Equality Charter and staff support networks that have been developed by the Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion partnership.

The HR and Research and Enterprise departments will continue to facilitate the Vitae Concordat working group, coordinate progress on the actions across the University while maintaining and reviewing compliance of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Research Staff. The Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation who has strategic oversight of research at the University has overall responsibility for the action plan for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Research Staff.