Career Development Action Plan

Creating the conditions, supports, frameworks and approaches to enable people to achieve and surpass their career aspirations and foster a truly inclusive research and innovation system that values and nurtures a wide range of careers and career paths.

Project	Actions	Measure of Success	Time Frame	Lead
Providing training and support in development of research skills and personal development	To create an environment where training and support is provided to support research skills development and personal skills development **Research Skills Training Programme** We will continue to provide a range of training and events to support academics to develop their research skills – for example, in the areas of research outputs, impact development and grant/awards development as well as support and guidance on REF A series of events will be available to all staff, but with specific events and programmes tailored to support our early career research community. In addition, we will launch our shared experience programme, where many early career and mid-career staff will learn and benefit from the shared experiences of our more experienced academic staff. **Personal Development** We will continue to provide a range of training and support for personal development, ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion. Our new personal development calendar of events will be updated annually, offering both generic and research specific personal development opportunities	Attendance Evaluation Attendance	Ongoing events run over the academic calendar year Ongoing events run over the academic calendar year	R&I P&C

	Development Appraisal Review Process (DAR) We will continue to support staff skills and development through our DAR process – a holistic, ongoing process, to develop, support and motivate all staff to be the best they can be and to gain all the relevant skills necessary to fulfil all aspects of their role and development. In addition, a new series of support documents, videos and training models to enable prepping for DAR, as well as the functionality for professional services colleagues to use an online system to capture DAR will be provided.	Engagement with the DAR process	Ongoing	P&C
	Learning Management System The process of integrating all these events and training into the learning management system so that your CPD data can be automatically captured, is currently being investigated.	Implementation of LMS System	2025/2026	P&C
	All in one Learning Space/Information Source We will commit to ensure that it is as easy as possible for staff to access this training information. We have developed a new research & innovation sharepoint to bring these all together into one space.	Usage	Summer 2025	R&I
	Research Support Services Website/Researchers Handbook We will continue to keep staff up to date on all the research support initiatives and programmes available as well as key contacts in R&I through our one source website and regularly updated researcher's handbook.	Usage	Ongoing – updated as required/ handbook issued bimonthly	R&I

	PhD Researchers Development Programme We will continue to grow and develop the extensive PhD Researchers Development Programme to support research skills training, transferable skills development, career development support, academic writing support, engagement and communication, and personal development.	Attendance Evaluation	Ongoing	Doctoral College
Supporting the career development of our research community	To provide our research community with guidance and support throughout their career development journey.			
	New Staff Welcome Induction Events We will ensure that all new staff are welcomed to Ulster and equipped with the necessary information and resources, through our quarterly new staff welcome and induction programmes. These are also supported by new staff induction sharepoint and toolkit.	Attendance Evaluation	Quarterly	P&C/R&I
	In addition, all academic/research staff are invited to an online introduction to research support services and introduction to PURE. More recently, current staff have also expressed an interest in these induction events, and we will be extending the programme to include existing staff.	Attendance Evaluation	Bimonthly	R&I
	Career Planning/interview Skills We will offer all staff training and support around career planning, interview skills and CV writing.	Attendance Evaluation	Ongoing	P&C
	Career Conversations We will facilitate and explore the possibility of developing a career conversations toolkit, which	Toolkit Development	2025/26	R&I/P&C

	could be tailored for different groups in the research ecosystem –technicians; PGRs (Life Beyond the PhD Series); Research Contract Staff; research professional staff; academic staff			
	Postdoctoral Staff Career Exploration As part of the Research Culture NI programme, jointly with Queen's University a specific programme was set up in 2024 to provide career development support and training for postdoctoral researchers and alternative career exploration. A series of events have been developed and are being implemented and a website featuring forthcoming events, training and career resources will be developed.	Attendance Evaluation Number of events	Ongoing	R&I
	PhD Researcher Career Development Specific workshops on Career Development for PhD Researchers are offered throughout the year e.g Preparing for an Academic Career, Applying for a Post Doc; Entrepreneurship, Careers in the Third Sector. Life Beyond the PhD series with PhD alumni from Ulster returning to talk to current PhD Researcher about their career journeys and opportunities.	Attendance Evaluation	Ongoing	Doctoral College
	Research Professional Career Development A two year project commenced in early 2025 to map out a framework for development opportunities and paths between roles for professional services staff. This work is in its formative stages at time of Action Plan development.	Development of a framework	2027	P&C

Supporting career development through mentoring, shared experiences and coaching	Creating a supportive environment where our research community can engage and collaborate, develop their careers and learn from shared experiences **Research Mentoring Programme** The benefits of mentoring are well documented and programmes such as the Research Mentoring programme have yielded excellent results and support for academics/researchers in their research skills and career development. We will continue to support this programme but will also review across other mentoring activities and develop best practice in ensuring continued effectiveness, inclusivity and areas for improvement.			
	We will survey mentors and mentees who have participated in the Research Mentoring programme and evaluate uptake, impact, deliverables and strategies to improve the programme	Responses/feedback	Autumn 2025	R&I
	We will assess the wider range of mentoring programmes offered across the university, mapping the range of programmes available, to provide a baseline of mentorship for different groups and levels and assess any potential gaps.	Baseline of mentorship and gap analysis	Autumn 2025	R&I/P&C
	Professional and Personal Development Mentoring Programmes We will continue to support career, professional and personal development through the current mentoring programmes and introduction of new mentoring programme initiatives. These include	Attendance and engagement	Launching Autumn 2025	P&C

	Management and Leadership – Aspiring for Management; New Manager Experience; Empowering Women in Leadership; Leading Teams; BRAVE leadership **Careers Guidance** – Professional Growth and Career Progression; Personal Effectiveness and Confidence Building; Networking & Relationships **Skills Development** – project planning; digital literacy; effective feedback; and leading and adapting to organisation change			
	Coaching Programme: We will continue to provide coaching support and training for our research community throughout the academic year.	Attendance	Ongoing	P&C
	Co-Mentoring Programme We will explore the development and piloting of a programme of co-mentoring to promote professional learning, development, explore the value of creating coaching practices, coaching cultures in research and align to existing mentoring and coaching approach.	Pilot Launched	2025/26	R&I
Enabling career development by providing staff with 'time and space' to develop and conduct research activities	**Sabbatical Leave:** Periods of sabbatical enable an individual to develop personally, whilst delivering clear research outputs and/or teaching enhancements. This ongoing programme has annual calls and the policy and application data are regularly equality screened.	Uptake and review of project outcomes and personal testimonies	Ongoing	R&I
	Academic Workload Allocation Framework: The University has had an academic workload allocation	Agree Addendum to framework	2025/2026	DVC/Professional Executive Committee

	framework in place since 2013. Negotiations with UCU are underway to agree an addendum to the existing framework which will give greater clarity to the process of workload allocation.			
	Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: As a signatory of the Concordat the University is committed to providing opportunities, structured support, encouragement and time for researchers to engage in a minimum of 10 days professional development pro rata per year, recognising that researchers will pursue careers across a wide range of employment sectors.	A comprehensive programme of training mapped to Vitae's Researcher Development Framework	Ongoing	R&I/P&C
	Career Development Initiatives: To increase awareness and signpost towards wider career development initiatives. These include for example, centralised induction processes, supporting return to work and career breaks'	Engagement	Ongoing	P&C
Enhancing the career development and supporting the roles of Technicians	Support the career development of technicians through training, development and recognition: **Fair Attribution Guidelines:** We are committed to ensuring that the vital contribution of technicians in supporting and enabling research is appropriately recognised and attributed through inclusion on research outputs such as publications and patents – the Fair Attribution Guidelines set outs the guidelines for researchers to follow.	Policy is in place, dissemination	Ongoing	Technician's Steering Group

	HEA Accreditation We will facilitate a process to encourage HEA Accreditation and deliver an agreed plan of technical engagement with HEA including joining technical advisory groups.	15% of technical staff to attain HEA accreditation	2026	Technician's Steering Group
	Membership of HEaTED We will join Higher Education and Technician Educational Development (HEaTED) National Technician Development Centre (NTDC) which provides access to training and engagement opportunities.	Membership achieved and training opportunities accessed	Membership Completed/training ongoing	Technician's Steering Group
	REF-Returnable Status Develop draft policy on REF-returnable status of technicians and technical staff	Policy to be developed and dissemination	2026	R&I/Technician's Steering Group
	Website/Resources Develop and promote online resources - information available via our technician web page and Teams area.	Website in place – teams area to be created	Ongoing	Technician's Steering Group
Fostering and facilitating research leadership development	We will foster and support research leadership through a range of programmes: **ENGAGE/BRAVE Programme** The current ENGAGE programmes provides development opportunities for people managers and aspiring people managers, linked back to the BRAVE Leadership Framework. We will be developing leadership support for early career academics and varying research roles i.e.	Attendance & participation	Ongoing	P&C/R&I

	Principal Investigator, through series of events, masterclasses and showcasing.			
	Research Director Development Programme As at April 2025, conversations are ongoing to scope out development opportunities and/or a development programme for Research Directors – this is currently being worked on by People Development in the Employee Experience Directorate of P&C.	Creation of framework in the first instance	2025/26	P&C