

MARCH 2022



# The Concordat

to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Highlight Report 2022



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# Introduction

This highlight report provides an update for the research and innovation community on the governance and implementation of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#). The report will consider the current policy context, review signatory activity, and offer a forward look at the Researcher Development Concordat, as it is commonly known.



The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is an agreement between universities, research institutes and funders to work collaboratively to create, maintain and support a positive, inclusive, and accessible research and innovation culture in the UK. The concordat was reviewed in consultation with the research community in 2018 and [a revised version was published](#) in September 2019. This version reflects the developments in the research and innovation community since the initial version, published in 2008. The revised concordat outlines obligations for institutions, funders, managers of researchers and researchers categorised into three pillars: Environment and Culture, Employment and Professional Development.

Whilst the pandemic has disrupted the implementation of the concordat, many institutions have undertaken their gap analyses and made progress towards the implementation of their action plans. We expect this to accelerate as the sector, and the United Kingdom, recovers from the pandemic and plans for the future.



Since the UK began to open-up last summer, signatories of the concordat have continued to review and make progress in implementing their action plans. In July 2021, the UK government evidenced its commitment to improving research culture, employment conditions for researchers and support for attracting global talent with the publication of the [R&D People and Culture Strategy](#). The strategy aims to facilitate a research culture that encourages, supports, and celebrates the flow of talent across the whole R&D ecosystem. It sets out objectives categorised by three pillars - People, Culture and Talent – which, together, support an overall ambition of attracting and retaining an additional 150,000 researchers by 2030. The Researcher Development Concordat is a powerful tool to catalyse the delivery of this strategy, by guiding and galvanising researchers, managers of researchers, institutional leaders, and funders to make collective change.

Both the Researcher Development Concordat and the R&D People and Culture Strategy recognise the barriers the research community face when balancing their work, life, and career progression. Creating an environment and culture across the whole ecosystem that celebrates mobility across sectors, diversity of experience and inclusive working conditions requires a commitment from the four key concordat stakeholder groups to use the concordat as a continuous improvement tool to drive real systemic change.

The [Researcher Development Concordat Strategy Group \(RDCSG\)](#) oversees the implementation, progression, and development of the concordat. The group is made up of sector representatives who are committed to catalysing change in our research culture. In 2021, the secretariat was transferred from Vitae to Universities UK (UUK) just as the RDCSG had undertaken a review of its governance structure, activities, and monitoring processes. UUK supported the implementation of the review's recommendations. This year, the RDCSG and secretariat are looking forward to using the new governance structure to monitor concordat progression closely, offer support to signatories and galvanise a strong community of practice.

Signatories are required to conduct a gap analysis and publish an action plan within a year of signing the concordat and to publish a short annual report on their websites to update on their progress in every subsequent year. The concordat is also used by some organisations to support their applications for the European Commission's [HR Excellence in Research Award](#) through a process managed by Vitae. This Award recognises the steps taken by institutions to enhance working conditions for researchers across Europe as set out in the [European Charter and Code for Recruitment of Researchers](#). At the moment the processes for reporting on the concordat and the HR Excellence in Research Award are poorly aligned. To address this problem and minimise bureaucracy, Universities UK and Vitae are working together to improve alignment and ensure that the annual reporting on the concordat informs and supports the application process for the HR Excellence in Research Award to benefit those institutions which choose to be involved in both initiatives.



This highlight report provides signatory statements from the RDCSG members to illustrate progress over the last two years, good practice case studies from a selection of signatories and finally a forward look towards what to expect in 2022.

# Statements from the Researcher Development Concordat Strategy Group (RDCSG)

In this section, RDCSG representatives provide statements on their respective organisational progress in implementing the obligations of the concordat. Progress has been made to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies, skills provision, robust processes to effectively consult with internal research and innovation communities and networking support for early-career researchers. The signatory statements are presented here in alphabetical order.

## The British Academy

During 2021 the British Academy reviewed its role as funder against the concordat principles and prepared an updated action plan. Across all three principles the Academy has made progress and continues to work with other funders and bodies to create a healthy and supportive culture for researchers.

During 2020 and 2021 the Academy convened a working group to consider practical opportunities to advance equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across the research funding activities of the Academy. Its recommendations already underway during 2021 include reviewing the language and approach to funding documentation, the reordering of information for peer reviewers to present the research proposal before the personal information, and changes to the EDI data collected to reflect broader characteristics, all of which promote greater equality of opportunity.

The Academy offers funding schemes at key transition points for researchers and annually reviews the balance of funding in support of these schemes. During 2021 the Academy piloted two new opportunities for researchers wishing to develop new research skills and seeking to build collaborative relationships beyond academia. The success of these schemes in supporting employment opportunities for researchers will inform the development of these schemes in 2022.

In response to the challenges faced by ECRs and in support of all three principles of the Researcher Development Concordat, in 2021 the Academy initiated a two-year pilot establishing an Early Career Researcher Network for humanities and social sciences. The establishment of this network is being supported by the Wolfson Foundation. The pilot phase started in the autumn 2021 in the Midlands and in addition will run in the South-West England and Scotland during 2022. Membership of the network is open to all researchers in humanities and social sciences, regardless of their background,

employment status, and sector. The network is responsive to the needs of the early career research community and as such creates an environment for ECRs to lead the discussion of challenges they face and then work with the Academy on opportunities to explore and address these through events and activities.

Through these three major initiatives and actions, the Academy has sought to ensure the concordat principles are embedded throughout its role as a funder.

## Cancer Research UK (CRUK)

In 2021, CRUK published [an action plan](#) to demonstrate our commitments as a funder and emphasise the importance of our researchers and their development. The action plan outlines pre-existing initiatives we will continue and where we commit to new actions.

To meet the obligations of the Environment and Culture obligation in the concordat, CRUK is a member of the UK Clinical Academic Training Forum (CATF) which aims to address key challenges faced by the clinical academic community. CATF is due to publish a cross-funder COVID memory statement to reassure the research community that funders are aware of the continuing impacts of COVID-19 on researchers and are taking these consequences into account when reviewing grant applications. CRUK continues to prioritise our commitment to create a positive, diverse and inclusive research environment by making progress under our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) in research action plan](#). In the past year this included funding dedicated career support programmes, such as our partnerships with [In2ScienceUK](#) and [Black in Cancer](#), to ensure more young people from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds can enter the academic pipeline.

To meet the objectives of the Employment pillar of the concordat, CRUK held a consultation with early-to mid-career researchers in 2021 to feed into CRUK's forthcoming research strategy and refresh implementation plans. This consultation considered training and career development, including how best to improve job security, and to set clearer expectations for host institutions of researchers funded by CRUK fellowship awards.

CRUK continues to support opportunities to develop leadership and management qualities, for Professional Development, including providing funded placements on leadership courses such as the EMBO lab management course and the StellarHE programme for diverse leaders. CRUK researchers also benefit from [pro-bono coaching sessions](#) offered through coaches graduated from the Mastered programme by executive coach training firm, Meyler Campbell, and mentoring opportunities through our [Women of Influence scheme](#) to support female researchers to stay in cancer research and progress to senior positions.

## Department for the Economy Northern Ireland

The Department conducted a self- assessment of its compliance with the funders' commitments as set out in the concordat. As a result, the Department has updated the departmental website and reviewed its funding commitment letters to ensure that they stipulate that compliance with the concordat is a condition of funding. The Department has also reviewed its annual assurance process to make sure it is receiving adequate assurance from the HEIs.

The Department has engaged with the HEIs in respect of their compliance with the Concordat and received assurances on their publication of annual reports and action plans for 2021-2022.

## Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

While publication of HEFCW's Action Plan was delayed by COVID-19 disruptions, the [Action Plan](#) was published in May 2021, alongside a [blog post](#) outlining HEFCW's view of the challenges facing researcher careers and employment conditions in the current HE sector landscape. HEFCW report annually against the commitments in its Action Plan to its Council, ensuring robust oversight and governance of HEFCW actions to promote implementation of the concordat's principles.

Some of the items in HEFCW's action plan reflect our ongoing commitment to fund high quality researcher training and development programmes in Wales as a crucial way we can support the implementation of the concordat's principles. We continue to provide funding for the Sêr Cymru programme, a multi-million-pound programme to bring scientific talent into Wales, and [Welsh Crucible](#), an award winning development programme for early career researchers. We have [recently finalised a funding partnership](#) with the Learned Society of Wales (LSW) for LSW to develop a national support programme for researchers in Wales. This programme will deliver projects to support early-career, mid-career and senior researchers in developing their networking, mentoring, and collaborative capacity. We are funding AdvanceHE to deliver a series of development workshops for future research leaders. This varied portfolio ensures that researchers in Wales have a growing range of opportunities to develop their skills, progress their careers, and build collaborative and support networks with other researchers.

The COVID-19 pandemic put all researchers and their projects under new and extreme pressures, but these pressures were felt hardest by those members of the research base whose longer-term employment was least secure. To support these researchers, HEFCW provided £7.4m to the Aberystwyth-led collaborative project 'Protecting the

Research Base in Wales', through the [Higher Education Investment and Recovery Fund](#). This project brought together all 8 research active universities in Wales and provided financial support to PGRs, ECRs, and staff in need of bridging support, who had experienced pandemic-related disruptions to their research activities. This investment helped improve job security among these vulnerable groups of researchers at a time of significant uncertainty.

As a national funding body, HEFCW engages with other organisations across the R&I landscape in all its work, and our efforts to promote the implementation of the concordat's principles is no exception. Therefore, certain items in our action plan reflect our commitment to centre matters of researcher employment and working culture and conditions in our collaborative work. We are an observer member of the new [UKRI Forum for tackling bullying and harassment in R&I](#). In our work with the other national funding bodies of the UK on REF 2021 and future research assessment, we consider the impact of research assessment processes on researcher careers and research cultures. The 4 national funding bodies jointly provide funding for the concordat's secretariat function at Universities UK, further reflecting our full support for the concordat and its implementation. We engage regularly with funded institutions on matters of research culture and researcher careers.

Finally, in reviewing its core research funding methodology and continuing to pursue the recommendations of the Welsh Government commissioned Diamond Review (2016) and Reid Review (2018) to sustain core research funding at least in real terms, HEFCW is working to ensure that research careers in Welsh HEIs can be supported by robust and reliable core funding in coming years.

## Scottish Funding Council

The Scottish Funding Council became a signatory to the revised Researcher Development Concordat on 10 September 2019. As a funder, we seek assurance of Scottish institutions' compliance with the Researcher Development Concordat through the annual Outcome and Investment Agreement process. For research-related non-core funding, compliance with the concordat is now included as a standard condition of grant on all offer letters.

In June 2021, SFC published its final review report [Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research](#), which contained three key recommendations directly relevant to the concordat. A revised SFC Researcher Development Concordat implementation plan was presented to SFC RKEC committee in August 2021. This plan demonstrates the progress made so far towards concordat principles and specifically links recommendations from the review with the principles and requirements of the concordat, to ensure that future review implementation work embeds consideration of the development of researchers at its core. The revised

implementation plan was approved and is published on the SFC website. It will be updated as review implementation planning, and work continues.

## **Keele University**

We are currently in the process of completing our submission to renew our HR Excellence in Research Award at Keele University and completing our 8-year review. Through reviewing our successes to date and learning from the challenges encountered, we have been reflecting on our progress so far in relation to our HR Excellence in Research Award and the obligations of the concordat. Over the past 2 years we have implemented new workload allocation principles to improve consistency and fairness, we have launched our new PGR supervisor training for new supervisors and launched a new Health & Wellbeing Strategy. We have held several successful events including 13 Grand Challenge lectures, an annual Impact & Engagement Festival, and an annual Researcher Summer School. Strong progress has been made with our commitment to improve EDI resulting in an increase in female representation within key academic levels and gaining the Disability Confident Employer Award.

As part of the renewal, we are finalising our Action Plan for the next two years and have set some ambitious targets for the future. Activities include the implementation of a new advanced PhD supervisor training programme (in line with the UKCGE Research Supervisor Recognition Programme), launch of a new Dignity & Respect Policy Statement, launch of a new mandatory 'Unconscious Bias' training module, and rollout of a new university fellowship scheme. We will also continue good practice through the continuing work of our Research Leaders Forum, Researcher Forum, Academic Staffing Standards Group, and School, Faculty and University Committees. We have some ambitious aims including increasing the number of staff using career development plans and formal career development reviews, significantly increasing the number of staff reporting minimum 10 days CPD per year and increasing the number of staff reporting appraisals as useful.

## **National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)**

The mission of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. Our core workstreams and areas of strategic focus align and support the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat and we aim to ensure that in our role as a signatory we take an inclusive approach to ensure the breadth of the NIHR research workforce is considered.

Within our strategy, [Best Research for Best Health: The Next Chapter](#), there are several commitments that we have made to improving research culture and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our organisation and processes. For

example, in professional and career development we are examining post-doctoral careers that exist outside the academic track, working with other funders to engage clinicians in research as well as recognising their contribution as Clinician Researchers with a new credentialing framework. We have also collaborated with MRC and Wellcome Trust to clearly state to host institutions of clinical academics the standards we expect in their support of our award holders.

In December 2021 we published our first [Diversity Data Report](#) and have initiated several areas for action including introducing new policies and interventions to improve inclusion and ensuring funding calls and their promotion are more accessible and reach underrepresented groups.

We are committed to continuing to support the implementation and championing of the Researcher Development Concordat.

## The Royal Society

The Royal Society's fundamental purpose is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

The Society is currently involved in improving the promotion of its funding schemes and meeting with institutions collectively and individually to share data and encourage them to support a broader range of talented candidates to apply. We are also actively engaging with relevant early career researchers on areas around ethnicity and disability to plan the implementation of changes aimed at making the assessment processes more accessible and inclusive.

We continue to engage with and listen to the research community to promote positive research cultures and working conditions. Throughout the pandemic, the Royal Society worked with Fellows of the Royal Society to ensure a fair and appropriate support for researchers. A statement outlining the impact of Covid-19 has been included in all our funding calls to account for disruptions caused by the pandemic to research activities recognising that these may vary according to personal contexts and diverse career paths. The Royal Society also provided costed extensions to a large number of grants and no-cost extensions to many more to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their research and research teams.

We continue to work with University and Research Institutions to support the development of future research leaders and ensure they can thrive in an increasingly global and diverse research environment. In June 2021, we reviewed the guidance provided to Head of Departments for statement of support to early career fellowship applicants. The revised guidance sets clear expectations on the provision of career development opportunities to fellowship holders and provides reassurance that

effective and transparent arrangements were used to recruit the candidates in line with best practice for equality, diversity and inclusion.

We are updating the bullying and harassment policy to better align with other funders to improve consistency of practice and maximise impact across the sector, whilst clarifying expectations for Host Organisations.

The Society's career development programmes offer its researchers opportunities to enhance their careers through training, mentoring, networking and thrive in an increasingly global and diverse research environment. We are currently expanding the portfolio of training and development opportunities to ensure researchers are equipped with the skills to lead and manage their group and broaden their career options. The Society is also strengthening the mentoring offerings by harnessing the expertise of its Fellowship, the award holder alumni network and senior researchers to ensure support to newly appointed research fellows in key areas such as how to navigate the challenges of establishing an independent group, build effective networks and achieve a work-life balance.

The Society is committed to engage with other organisations to implement new activities that will empower research fellows to achieve their career potential in response to the continuous challenges of an ever-changing research environment. By contributing to the delivery of the SUSTAIN programme the Society has built a long-lasting and successful partnership with the Academy of Medical Sciences. This partnership is aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of female researchers in senior academic positions in the UK. The SUSTAIN programme integrates a range of approaches including interactive career development workshops, peer to peer networks and one to one mentoring to enable women early career researchers to develop their own, personal leadership styles needed for their successful career progression. Following the success of this programme, the Society is now scoping new activities to broaden the diversity pool of applicants and ensure equality of opportunities between different groups of applicants.

## **UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)**

UKRI have engaged widely with the sector to raise awareness of the concordat's principles: with both our external communities and the researchers employed in our centres, institutes, and units. We have engaged directly with researchers to enable them to input into UKRI strategy and policy, including by establishing the UKRI Early Career Researcher forum to hear directly from researchers. This has enabled them to input into the UKRI Future Research Assessment Programme, BEIS Bureaucracy Review, the R&D People and Culture Strategy, UKRI and Council Strategy development, and Council support for researchers. We have also attended and presented at a range of engagement events including the National Postdoc Conference, National Postdoc

appreciation week, Scottish Researcher Development Forum, and many local events. We have launched the [101 jobs campaign](#) to highlight the range of roles in research and innovation.

As part of UKRI's policy work, we have aligned our approach to the Technician Commitment and Researcher Development Concordat, to focus on the core values of these frameworks and encourage porosity between different types of roles within R&I. We have ensured the principles of the concordat were included in the R&D People and Culture Strategy, launched the Future Research Assessment Programme, including a greater emphasis on research culture in research assessment and initiated the rollout of the Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI), to enable applicants to evidence a wider range of contributions. Finally, we have published a [draft EDI strategy](#), and opened a consultation with the R&I community.

As an employer, we have convened a Talent Initiatives Advisory Group to oversee the implementation of our concordat action plan and development of an employer facing concordat plan. We have also engaged widely with the researcher communities within our CIUs and convened a working group to develop an employer facing plan.

## Universities UK

As secretariat of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers since 2021, we lead on monitoring, supporting, and reporting on the progress of the concordat. UUK develops the papers for the Researcher Development Concordat Strategy Group (RDCSG) and steers strategic discussions to represent the current issues for signatories. We also manage task and finish groups to consistently review the concordat, measure the success of the strategy group and increase engagement activities with the research and innovation community. We have developed a [dedicated website](#) for the concordat to provide a clear web presence for signatories to access information, guidance, and resources. The website provides an opportunity for researchers to publish stories about their experiences with employment conditions, culture and professional development and the concordat's impact.

UUK are working with other organisations to implement the government's R&D People and Culture Strategy and to ensure policy reviews remain in line with the concordat's aims and values. For example, UUK have co-developed an Alternative Uses Group (AUG) with UKRI to explore alternative applications for the [Resume for Research and Innovation](#): a narrative CV format to broaden the experiences recognised in recruitment, promotion, and information gathering processes e.g., national reporting efforts.

In 2022, we will work with the RDCSG to plan and host an annual forum event for the research and innovation community to explore the impact of the concordat including sharing practice, networking, and learnings from policymakers.

## University of Portsmouth

Our [action plan](#) draws heavily on feedback received from our career-stage fora via various routes including fora discussions, focus groups and surveys. Furthermore, the plan responds to a gap analysis that identifies areas in which the university is working towards the obligations of the concordat (e.g., annual review, and induction), and areas where there was already provision (e.g., opportunities for researchers and their managers to engage with policy development). We triangulated this gap analysis with the university's strategic imperatives, and the feedback received through consultation.

This process resulted in our identification of five priority areas centred on research staff, and the support provided to research staff by academic Principal Investigators (PI) and the Institution. These five areas align with one or more of the concordat obligations identified within the gap analysis as requiring action; we have provided a cross-reference in the action plan to the relevant obligation. The University's Research Development Group will periodically review all obligations within the concordat to ensure continuing alignment, and where possible, enhancement. The five interrelated priority areas are provided below:

1. Embed 10 days of development time in our research culture and practices.
2. Effective Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) for all research staff, and for managers of research staff. The latter to include specific reference to their responsibilities for researchers in respect of the concordat.
3. Effective inductions for our research staff.
4. Prepare our research staff for future careers.
5. Foster effective engagement (in the issues of the concordat) across all stakeholders/levels: Institution, senior staff, PIs/managers of research staff, research staff

Cutting across our action plan are other institutional priorities relating to equality and diversity, in particular race and ethnicity, and gender. The university has identified race and ethnicity as a strategic focus in all areas of its business, and we will view each action through a race and ethnicity lens as we implement our concordat action plan and put measures in place as required. Where there are overlapping objectives, we are liaising closely with colleagues leading on the Knowledge Exchange Concordat, our Race Equality Charter working group, and, for gender, with our Athena Swan working group.

# Case studies

This section provides a selection of case studies that highlight good practice in the sector. Popular mechanisms for the improvement of research culture are networks, forums, and communities of practice. Other clear areas of interest are the diversification of the assessment of people, for example processes for promotion, recruitment, and awarding; improvement of leadership skills; and raising awareness of the concordat's impact. Case studies are provided in alphabetical order.



## The British Academy

### Early Career Researcher Network

In response to the challenges faced by early career researchers (ECRs), and in support of all three principles of the Researcher Development Concordat, the British Academy has initiated a two-year pilot (2021-2023) establishing an Early Career Researcher Network for humanities and social sciences. The establishment of this network is being supported by the Wolfson Foundation.

The pilot phase will run in three areas of the UK, Midlands, South-West England, and Scotland, and will be delivered in partnership with local universities. Membership of the network is open to all researchers in humanities and social sciences, regardless of their background, employment status, and sector. During the pilot phase we aim to:

- provide opportunities that ECRs do not currently have access to
- encourage diversity and inclusivity
- nurture and facilitate greater engagement between and across ECRs and wider research community, regionally and nationally
- draw on the Academy's unique ability to convene and nurture intersectoral collaboration to create unique opportunities for ECRs

The network is being developed to be responsive to the needs of the early career research community. As such, the Academy are putting in place a structure which empowers ECRs to identify their requirements and needs. For this to succeed during the pilot phase, they will be seeking to understand and address barriers to participation by ECRs, which might include limited time and funding, other career pressures as well as uneven support across the sector. As the network seeks to include researchers from all backgrounds, a challenge to overcome also includes reaching out beyond academia to different sectors. As the network grows there will be a further challenge of continuing to meet the expectations of a large and diverse membership through supporting and offering activities and events that meet their needs across career, employment, and cultural issues.

The vision for the ECR network is to create a thriving ecosystem of early career researchers, UK wide, in which ECRs can strengthen their skills and networks to reach their potential regardless of their funding source or background. Following the completion of the pilot phase in 2023, the Academy expects to scale up the network to include ECRs from all part of the UK.

## **The Royal Society**

### **Benchmarking and Monitoring Diversity Data in Grant-Making**

The Royal Society has published [reports](#) focused on the ethnicity of the STEM academic community and the benchmarking analysis of the UK postdoctoral population eligible to apply to the Society's early career fellowship programmes and how this compares to the applicant pool for those schemes.

The reports showed a significant variation in rates of progression and outcomes across ethnic minority group of students and academic staff and highlighted that the applicant diversity data of the Society's fellowship programmes is not representative of the wider eligible pool of the postdoctoral population in the UK. As part of the actions taken to address these issues, the Society has convened a Funders' Forum to bring together funders of research fellowships and awards.

The aims of the forum focused on:

- sharing the benchmarking approach
- discussing best practice and ideas on monitoring of diversity data in grant-making
- understanding more broadly how funders can work together to develop a more inclusive research environment.

The forum discussions so far have highlighted the importance of benchmarking grant-diversity data to ensure inclusiveness of funding programmes. It was noted that while the Society's reports were beneficial in outlining general benchmarking principles for early career researchers, the identification of a common baseline profile across the wider funding sector may not be possible due to differences in eligibility requirements for each scheme. Attendees recognised the value of working collaboratively and engaging with institutions and agreed to continue to work together to share progress made on current activities in order to identify key areas of work that the sector needs to look at to make a positive difference in attracting and developing a diverse workforce.

## University of Liverpool

### Researcher Development Concordat Module

[The Academy](#) at the University of Liverpool has produced a new development module that explores the principles of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and the resulting responsibilities for staff. The open-access [module](#) is the first of its kind in the Higher Education sector nationally and further embodies the university's focus on sector-leading researcher development. The module is signposted to staff during induction via the role related obligatory framework via the PGR Supervisors' Network. The module aims to further enhance the career and professional development of researchers, managers of researchers and professional colleagues supporting the institution's researcher community. It serves to foster conversations that nurture a positive and inclusive culture in which researchers take responsibility for the development of their personal and professional practice. As role-related

development, the module will be available to new and existing staff as needed, allowing them to refresh their understanding of the Researcher Development Concordat.

## **Principal Investigator (PI) Network of Professional Practice**

[Prosper](#) is a new approach to career development that unlocks postdocs' potential to thrive in multiple career pathways. The goal is to open the huge talent pool that exists within the postdoctoral research community, to the benefit of postdocs themselves, Principal Investigators (PIs), employers and the wider UK economy. This is more relevant now than ever - unlocking postdocs' expertise and experience will be vital as the UK moves into a successful post COVID-19 world. Prosper is led by the University of Liverpool, working alongside partners at the University of Manchester and Lancaster University, and is funded by the Research England RED fund. Prosper's 3 pillars are: co-creation with employers, democratisation of access and recognition of the pivotal role of PIs in postdoc career development. The Prosper PI network was launched in September 2020, where PIs and managers of researchers come together to share and evolve best practice in postdoc career development. The network puts PIs and managers of researchers at the centre of championing postdocs and driving change in how we approach their career development. The network gives PIs the opportunity to:

- Share experiences and build relationships with employer partners, opening new networks and opportunities for collaboration
- Raise the profile and recognition accorded to successful postdoc development at institutional level
- Influence, pilot and shape the development of Prosper and its resources to support both PIs and postdocs in their career development
- Share knowledge and learn from colleagues at partner institutions across the full range of disciplines

## **University of Manchester**

### **Research Promotion Criteria**

The University of Manchester has introduced an annual promotion round open to all research staff irrespective of their contractual status and external funding stream to increase promotion opportunities for all research staff. Clear promotion criteria are available for all grades of research staff and promotion committees openly invite and encourage applications providing evidence of working at a higher level.

Research staff promotion criteria was developed to align with the academic staff promotion criteria; two sets of criteria were developed for promotion from research assistant to research associate and criteria for promotion from research associate to research fellow. The criteria were developed through a process of discussion and consultation with input from HR, researchers, and research leaders. Once the criteria were agreed, they were added to the University HR promotions webpages and to each faculty's HR promotion webpages. Training and workshops were also provided for both promotion panel members and research staff who want to apply.

The University of Manchester's Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG) measures the data for research staff promotions annually and this was maintained as a success measure for the introduction of this programme. The RSSG has oversight of the HREiR process and implementation of the Concordat Action Plan. Research staff promotion workshops were also held annually and the RSSG monitored the take up and feedback from those workshops.

The introduction of this clear criteria and open application mechanism has improved the university's practice to meet the obligation of the concordat to provide clear and transparent merit-based promotion pathways that recognise the full range of researcher's contributions and the diversity of personal circumstances.

## University of Strathclyde

### **Researchers' Group: Institutional Research Staff Association**

The University of Strathclyde's Researchers Group is an Institutional Research Staff Association. As a highly effective route for the Researcher Voice to be heard at an institutional level, the group allows the researchers to be central to understanding and addressing all aspects of the Researcher Development Concordat while providing opportunities for researchers' own professional, career and leadership development.

This group provides representatives on institutional and faculty-based research and related committees as well as providing significant ongoing input into activities such as the Researcher Development gap analysis and implementation. Overall, this provides a formal, and highly effective, route for the researcher voice to be heard at an institutional level allowing them to be central to understanding and addressing all aspects of the Researcher Development Concordat while providing opportunities for the researchers own professional, career and leadership development.

The first members were tasked with writing a remit which was agreed through institutional committees, and this provided a focus for what the committee would do both in the short and long term. Momentum was gathered through a fairly formal

committee structure (co-chairs, secretary, social media, etc) with regular meetings, agendas, and minutes plus a process for reporting into institutional committees when deemed appropriate. Members of the Researcher Development Team act as liaison with the central university and provide support both within and outside of the meetings. When most members of the association are on fixed-term contracts and are all taking part on top of their primary role, a three co-chair structure (incoming, sitting and outgoing for six months each) plus the other roles helps to share the load and provide support if a member leaves the University earlier than expected. The group is promoted through the university newsletter, email, events, and the co-chairs attend the Research Staff Induction. The impact of the association was evaluated through processes such as the EU HR Excellence in Research Award and the Researcher Development Concordat Gap Analysis as well as ongoing communication with the researchers themselves. Following on the success of this group, our Doctoral Researchers also started Strathclyde's Doctoral Researchers' Group.

#### **Submit a case study or a story**

We welcome case studies of good practice from the sector and stories from researchers or innovators about personal career development experience for publication online. Stories from researchers will be published on the Researcher Development Concordat website.

Additionally, a new practice-sharing platform for case studies, hosted by Vitae, provides new visibility for the efforts and actions of signatories. Collectively, the platform, together with the new website and social media presence, will provide researchers and all stakeholders with better transparency and engagement opportunities.

Please submit your case studies to the [Platform of Practice](#) or your story to [Researcher Stories](#).

# Forward look

In 2022, the Researcher Development Concordat Strategy Group (RDCSG) is committed to engaging with the full breadth of stakeholders to enhance the support provision to implement the concordat. This can be achieved in the following ways:

- Roundtable meetings, and other engagement activities, with stakeholder groups to ensure voices from all areas of the research and innovation system reach strategic level. Stakeholder groups will include:
  - Heads of Department, Deans, Senior Research Leaders, Institutional Concordat Champions
  - Researcher Developers
  - Researchers
  - Principal Investigators (PIs)
  - Concordat Leads, R&I Administrators
  - Industry Leaders
  - Funding Leaders
  - Other concordats and agreements' steering groups
- Secretariat discussions with concordat leads at signatory institutions to monitor progress and offer support and networking.
- Support for the R&D People and Culture Strategy by developing its objectives, including working with UKRI to roll-out the Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) to broaden the experiences recognised for recruitment, promotion, and the assessment of people.
- Host an annual forum for all concordat stakeholders to engage with the community to explore their obligations, best practices, and networks.
- Develop clear guidance for reporting, including aligning reporting with the UK process of the HR Excellence in Research Award, for the benefit of those institutions that are involved in both processes.
- Engage with the next steps of the Concordats and Agreements Review commissioned by UKRI, Universities UK and Wellcome Trust to ensure the aims of the concordat are recognised.
- Publish an annual report to provide details on the progress of the sector nationally based on monitoring and analysis of concordat action plans and discussions with concordat leads.
- Continue developing the impact of the concordat's online presence via the website, social media and Platform of Practice.

The RDCSG and secretariat are committed to supporting the career development of researchers, including improvements to research culture, employment conditions and cross-sector mobility. We welcome discussions with current signatories, prospective

signatories, concordat leads, funders, senior university leaders or industry leaders on improving the impact of the concordat.

For further information, or any questions, please contact Dana Gamble, Policy Researcher at Universities UK and Policy Lead for the Researcher Development Concordat: [CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk).

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✉ [CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

**The Concordat**   
to Support the Career Development of Researchers