

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Action Plan 2023- 2025



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Foreword

“Our vision to deliver excellence in 2030 is rooted in our values, with a focus on four key areas: people, research, teaching and learning, and social and civic responsibility”

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030>

People and research are central to our University mission, which is driven by Strategy 2030. By signing the revised Concordat in 2020, we took a positive step towards improving our research environment and culture and underlined our commitment to the career development of our researchers.

Our response to signing the Concordat was to convene a Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) and draw up a two year action plan. We are proud of what we have collectively achieved over the past two years and our 2023-25 action plan focuses on growing and embedding the structures and mechanisms we have built, which centre on improving the coordination of support and communication for our researcher communities. Our Research Staff Hub will continue to grow and develop and will be key to supporting the implementation of the Concordat at local levels over the next two years. Integral to making this happen will be our networks and communities who work to support researchers develop and progress. We’ll continue to work in partnership across the University with other relevant groups and committees to ensure that this work is aligned with our broader research cultures work and related initiatives.

This Concordat Action plan has been developed in consultation with our research and professional services colleagues, through our Concordat Implementation Group and networks, and I am grateful for their time, input and effort.

Over the next two years our actions are focused on:

- **Communication and communities;** supporting visibility and diversity
- **Fair management of staff;** supporting inductions, redeployment and work on fixed term contracts
- **Professional and career development support;** for researchers and managers

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Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise

24th April 2023

Introduction

The University of Edinburgh became a signatory to the revised Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers in 2020 and we published our first two-year action plan in March 2021.

Our first action plan had a strong focus on improvement of communication and information for researchers and much of our work has been around the creation of structures and mechanisms to support this work. The use of data and evidence to underpin these initiatives has been central to their development. The outputs from our first action plan are set out in the Concordat Reporting Section on the Research Staff Hub.

- [Concordat Reporting](#)

This second two-year action plan builds on these outputs and aims to embed and support Concordat implementation across different areas of the University. Through our work to date, we have identified some areas which require more focused, targeted work and these are detailed in the plan. We shall continue to strengthen researcher involvement and voice in Concordat actions, through facilitation of relevant networks and support for representatives and post-doc champions.

Existing initiatives at the University which support the implementation of the Concordat

The Concordat does not exist in isolation and the success of its implementation is also intrinsically linked to a range of existing initiatives and structures across the institution. Effective collaboration and coordination with different groups and initiatives is vital and these support Concordat visibility and implementation.

1	Research Staff Hub
<p>The Research Staff Hub (RSH) was launched in 2021 and is a landing page for all research staff at the University of Edinburgh. It showcases and raises awareness of the support available to research staff from across the institution and coordinates all support at School/College and Support Group level. The RSH supports the research environment and culture at Edinburgh, by being a resource focused on improving communication, engagement and coordination and a platform to update on Concordat progress and developments for researchers and their managers.</p>	
2	Networks and representative structures
<p>Post-doc champion and advisory roles have been established across the institution and are important drivers in the implementation of Concordat principles. Researchers are represented on decision-making groups at College and University level. The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) provides central coordination and support for networks of researchers and facilitates events and connections.</p>	
3	Research Cultures Action Plan
<p>The University Research Cultures Action plan is a major step forward in the University's commitment to foster an environment in which research, researchers, and those that support them, can thrive. The Concordat actions are underpinned by the values in our Research Cultures Plan and care is taken to ensure complementarity of initiatives and to avoid duplication of effort by cross-representation on relevant implementation groups and maintaining effective communication channels.</p>	

Implementation and monitoring

The implementation of the Concordat action plan is coordinated by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and our Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) has oversight of tracking and monitoring progress and of identifying and setting new actions.

The CIG was set up in 2020 and comprises members from across the institution in diverse roles. The CIG meets bi-annually, with provision for setting up short-life working groups to focus on targeted areas of the Concordat.

Reports on progress are shared annually with the University Research Strategy Group.

[Concordat Implementation Group](#)

How the plan is structured

The Concordat sets out, in three clear principles: Environment and Culture, Employment and Professional and Career Development, the responsibilities of researchers, managers of researchers, institutions and funders.

Our actions for 2023-2025 are organised under these three principles.

1 | Environment and Culture

Environment and Culture actions are strengthened by the University Research Cultures Action plan, which will support our work in this area. Alignment of both action plans will ensure we are supporting a positive research culture for research staff, supporting projects and initiatives that cross over both areas.

Ref.	Action	Task and Deliverables	Owner(s)	Timescale
1.1	Working collaboratively and effectively across the University and sector	<p>Connect, collaborate and engage with relevant groups and action plans at the University, which support researchers. Ensuring connections are mutually beneficial, supporting outcomes and outputs that benefit the researcher community.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interface with the relevant committees and groups, both internally and externally, who are supporting research staff, work to share practice and knowledge Input into reporting across different committees and groups, ensuring the Concordat principles are incorporated 	CIG	Year 1 and Year 2
1.2	Networks and Communities	<p>Enhancement of University-wide researcher networks and communities. Providing structures and systems to allow researchers, and those who support them, to work together, develop professional and career development opportunities and share practice.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote awareness of different researcher communities Develop the Research Staff Hub as a space to showcase networks and communities and any opportunities they provide Increased engagement and central coordination of regular networking events e.g. Postdoc Champions network, Research Staff Societies network 	IAD	Year 1 and Year 2

1.3	Information and Visibility	<p>Communicating and embedding Concordat principles across the different areas of the University. Increasing visibility of our work, both internally and externally.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Research Staff Hub will continue to provide a central University landing point focused on improving communication, engagement and coordination and a platform to update on Concordat progress and developments for researchers and their managers. Increased engagement with the Research Staff Hub (measured through analytics and links on local pages) • Take up of opportunities to engage in external/ internal communications to improve visibility of initiatives and outputs e.g. drafting case studies, delivering presentations and publishing outputs 	IAD, CIG	Year 1 and Year 2
1.4	Promoting diversity and representation	<p>We recognise the diversity of our research staff population and will continue to identify and develop mechanisms to support underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued representation from all research staff groups on the Concordat Implementation Group and other relevant networks and communities • Make relevant connections with Equality Diversity and Inclusion committees and representatives across the University • Take positive measures to ensure that training and opportunities for researchers are inclusive 	CIG, IAD	Year 2

2 | Employment

The Employment principle ensures we are supporting all aspects of a researcher’s employment at the University. We continue to progress in this area through our work around streamlining central inductions, our research and work with redeployment support and a fixed term working group focused on the fair management of staff.

Ref.	Action	Task and Deliverables	Owner(s)	Timescale
2.1	Improved data on research staff population	<p>An understanding of our research staff population underpins all our Concordat responses. HR Data enables us to have increased clarity around the demographics of the research staff population at the University of Edinburgh and we will continue to use this data to inform and support our Concordat work and engage with groups, ensuring they are represented and supported.</p> <p>Deliverable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual demographic summary of our research staff will be reviewed alongside annual reporting 	HR, IAD	Year 1 and Year 2
2.2	Induction	<p>New Staff Meet-Ups, piloted October 2022 – April 2023 by IAD and HR Talent and Development, will be reviewed, updated and finalised with these induction events then introduced as part of our core programmes, providing a central resource to support staff inductions.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Staff Meet-Up events added into our core programmes and induction section on the central Research Staff Hub, and engagement measured through attendance and feedback New Staff Meet-Ups added to welcome information sent to all new staff, at School/ College and University level 	HR, IAD	Year 1

2.3	Redeployment	<p>Work closely with the Delivery Group for the University’s Research Culture Action Plan and the University’s Fixed Term Working Group to ensure that we build on the research undertaken in the 2021-2023 Concordat action plan and incorporate further developments into Concordat processes and promote.</p> <p>Deliverable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with relevant groups to ensure progress is incorporated into processes and communications 	Fixed Term Working group	Year 1
2.4	Contracts and Precarity	<p>Work closely with the University’s Fixed Term Working Group, whose remit is to look at how to move away from fixed term contracts.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support communication and implementation of outputs from the fixed term working group Maintenance of cross-representation on fixed term working group and reporting of outputs to Concordat Implementation Group for further dissemination 	Fixed Term Working Group, CIG, IAD	Year 2
2.5	Promotion pathways	<p>Gather and share practice around career promotion pathways for staff on research-only contracts.</p> <p>Deliverable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review guidance and resources to inform researchers about the process for promotion 	HR	Year 2

3 Professional and Career Development

Professional Development has been strengthened over the last two years and is now weaved throughout all our activities and embedded in our Research Staff Hub. Our focus will be to continue to enhance our careers support, develop frameworks, mentoring opportunities and provide training and structured support for managers of researchers.

Ref.	Action	Task and Deliverables	Owner(s)	Timescale
3.1	Support and time for professional development	<p>We will convene a Short Life Working Group to explore and develop recommendations around the 10 days professional development entitlement.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of an effective strategy to raise awareness and increase visibility of the 10 Days Professional Development entitlement among researchers and managers of researchers • Development of mechanisms to promote examples of local level practice, enabling the sharing of practice • Agreed University-wide recommendations on monitoring use of the 10 days. • Completion of short-life working group and communication of outputs to all relevant stakeholders 	CIG, IAD	Year 1 and Year 2
3.2	Career development and support	<p>Mechanisms to support the career development of researchers considering different career paths, including careers outside academia, through new support and resources.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a new resource providing a professional and career development framework, written for researchers and their managers and created to be tailored to different groups • Increased visibility of diverse career paths, increasing support, resources and information for careers outside academia and developing employer engagement • Development of Research Staff Hub with careers resources and support for all career paths • Increased engagement of researchers with central career support and resources, measured through attendance and feedback 	IAD	Year 1 and Year 2

3.3	Research manager and leader training and support	<p>We will develop new training and resources for managers of researchers and leaders to help them develop and navigate relevant processes and policies.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of new and enhanced training and development for managers of research staff • Development of resources to support PIs and managers to have meaningful conversations about all the career paths open to research staff and build their awareness of the careers support provision available to research staff • Signposting of University wide management and leadership programmes to researchers and managers 	IAD, Schools/Colleges	Year 2
3.4	Mentoring and coaching	<p>Undertake a scoping exercise to review mentoring and coaching support on offer across the University. Looking at schemes running at a School/Institute level, collating best practice, creating exemplars and combining with existing resources and training, to support any area considering running a local scheme.</p> <p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of model exemplars of mentoring and coaching support • Creation and dissemination of case studies of best practice • Research Staff Hub updated with information to support local level mentoring schemes 	IAD, Schools/Colleges	Year 1



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