

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

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Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers (*max 500 words*)

Research and people are at the core of the University's mission, forming two of the four pillars in our Strategy 2030¹. We recognise that the ability to deliver excellent research is crucially dependent on our research culture: the values, expectations and behaviours that shape how we support, deliver and communicate research.

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

Strategy 2030 makes the following commitment under the people pillar, 'We will value the contribution of every individual, regardless of whether they are students, staff, alumni or other contributors. We will support each other's development and career progress'.

The University has been proactive in its approach to improving research culture. A Research Cultures Working Group was convened in 2021, through an open application process. Care was taken to ensure that members covered all career stages and different career paths as well as different areas of concern. Members were also chosen for their links into other groups and networks in the University such as the Technicians Steering Committee, the Race Equality and Anti-Racism Subcommittee, and the Researcher Development Concordat Implementation Group (CIG). This group was tasked with the development of a University-wide Research Cultures Action Plan, which after extensive consultation was approved by the University Executive in early 2023. A representative Delivery Group is now working on an implementation plan, recognising that this is a living document and will develop and evolve over time.

The University recognises that creation and embedding of an inclusive and supportive culture for all researchers takes time and is complex. Those involved in drafting the Research Cultures Action Plan recognise that it is one part of a rich tapestry of existing initiatives and policies across the institution and that to ensure improvement in research cultures it is imperative that these initiatives are aligned and complementary. The Concordat is one of these broader initiatives and since becoming a signatory in 2020, the University has been working hard across the three principles to uphold its commitment to supporting research staff careers. The Research Cultures Action Plan is an opportunity to further strengthen and embed this work across the different areas of the institution.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) leads on progressing the Concordat at Edinburgh, with support from an implementation group to ensure broad representation from across the University. The Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) was formed in March 2020 and includes representation from staff who support postdocs, Human Resources, Edinburgh Research Office, Library Research Support Team, academics, Research Staff Societies representatives and Postdoc Champions. The CIG continues to meet twice a year to track progress and implementation of our action plan. Progress against our signatory responsibilities can be found on our Concordat webpage.

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success (*max 600 words*)

Environment and Culture

The Research Cultures Action Plan reflects the University Strategy 2030 commitment to foster an environment in which research, researchers, and those that support them, can thrive. The Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) is linked through cross-representation on University-wide Research Cultures work, to ensure alignment of areas focused on environment and culture, across both action plans. This is further supported by our various other University initiatives and committees that work to support a positive and inclusive research environment e.g., EDI committees, Research Integrity, Athena SWAN, etc. A key development at the University of Edinburgh, related to this principle, is the development of our Research Staff Hub² which provides a focus for all research staff related communication and activity, including links to research culture, wellbeing and researchers' rights and responsibilities. The appointment of Postdoc/Research Staff Champions in various Schools is an ongoing initiative to improve the dissemination of information and general support for research staff and our research culture. This structure is already embedded in several Schools/Colleges and the development of a role descriptor is providing further support to other Schools considering it. Several of our postdoc/research staff champions are also represented on, and feed into, our Concordat Implementation Group (CIG). The development and implementation of University-wide work on research cultures will be further supported through the creation of a Research Cultures lead post to be recruited in 2023.

Employment

The University People Strategy³ sets the strategic direction for the ongoing focus on people. This is a significant undertaking and brings together work from around the University on pay and reward, wellbeing and workload. It has a set of twelve objectives, organised under three themes; enhancing our working environment, developing our potential and strengthening our community. This underpins and

² <https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/>

³ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030/strategy-in-action/people-strategy>

supports our work on the Concordat employment principle. Our plans for implementation focus on further work around streamlining central inductions, on gathering and better understanding researcher demographics, building on the outcomes of our research-led work on redeployment support and working closely with the University fixed term working group focused on the fair management of staff.

Professional Development of Researchers

The University recognises the central role of professional development in developing the potential of all our staff. This is a clear commitment in both the Research Cultures Action Plan and the People Strategy. Professional development of researchers and research managers is embedded within our Research Staff Hub and this structure will be further developed to support implementation of this Concordat principle. We'll continue to enhance our careers support for different career paths, including beyond academia. A short-life working group will be established to support better understanding and implementation of the 10 days professional development entitlement. A scoping project on mentoring and coaching opportunities will review practice and opportunities across the University, allowing greater sharing of practice and development of support. We'll also strengthen our structured support and training for managers of research. This work will be supported through two new posts based in the Institute for Academic Development.

Measures for evaluating progress and success

- Engagement with and development of the Research Staff Hub
- Further development of post-doc champion roles and network
- Engagement with careers support and development of new resources and initiatives
- Development and engagement with support and training for managers of research
- Maintaining the CIG as a representative and engaged group
- Report and recommendations from a short-life working group on the 10 days professional development entitlement
- Completion of scoping project into mentoring and coaching across the University and development of resources/ support
- Continued alignment with and cross-representation on other relevant groups and initiatives across the University.

Further information can be found in our 2023-2025 Action plan <https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/concordat/concordat-reporting>

Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/Pis); Researchers]

Environment and Culture (*max 600 words*)

Institution

- A University-wide Research Cultures Working Group was established in 2021, and the Research Cultures Action plan was approved by the Executive following a period of extensive consultation. A Delivery Group will complete the implementation plans in 2023. The Concordat Implementation Group has been and will continue to be closely linked with the research cultures work through cross representation and alignment of actions. <https://www.ed.ac.uk/research-office/research-talent-and-culture/research-culture>
- A resource has been developed for leading a session on the Concordat in Schools/Colleges and as part of research staff society plans. The aim of the guide is to provide a structure and outline of a session that could be run to raise awareness of the Concordat. <https://edin.ac/3FULZyw>
- We've recently developed the 'Concordat Best Practice' webpage, with the aim to allow colleagues at Edinburgh to contribute examples of projects/initiatives related to the Concordat,

highlighting the support in place for research staff and sharing best practice <https://edin.ac/3np8mWo>

Academic Managers of Researchers

- A section, 'Resources for Managers' was developed on the Research Staff Hub and this links to relevant information, resources and training for any colleague who supports and manages researchers as part of their role. <https://edin.ac/3LQSAxJ>

Researchers

- The Research Staff Hub (RSH) is a landing page for all research staff at the University of Edinburgh, focused on improving communication, engagement and coordination and a platform to update on Concordat progress and developments for researchers and their managers. 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. <https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/>
- The Postdoc champion role (or equivalent) is responsible for supporting and encouraging postdocs to connect with School and wider University initiatives, access relevant support and engage in opportunities relevant to career and professional development. <https://edin.ac/3FG4WVx>. The Postdoc Champions Network was established and had its first networking event in 2023.
- The UoE Postdoc Society Organisers is a MS Teams space to support societies to share practice and coordinate on events/activities e.g., Postdoc Appreciation Week. In addition to this, societies run local level events, as part of their activity, and IAD supports networking and practice sharing through biannual networking events for all societies. <https://edin.ac/3KbzFfS>
- Researchers are represented on a number of committees (CIG, Research Culture, local

	<p>School/College committees e.g., CMVM Research Staff Committee) and they also are asked to feed into Concordat developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership coaching, supported by a suite of leadership resources, was offered to a number of researchers actively involved in societies, to support their involvement in these representative roles. https://edin.ac/35cObly ▪ Promotion and signposting from our Research Staff Hub, to and from local initiatives in Schools/Colleges is key to ensuring researchers are supported in their role. By way of example is our College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine’s ‘Early Career Researchers webpages: https://edin.ac/3FTOm4H
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The People Strategy underpins our work on the Concordat employment principle and to date our work has focused on piloting central level inductions, gathering data around our researcher demographics and work related to redeployment support and fixed term contracts. https://edin.ac/40uW7Wy ▪ A Fixed Term Staff Working Group, made up of senior management, HR, representatives from all three unions, has been established. This was set up to address part of the University of Edinburgh and UCU Collective Agreement regarding fixed-term academic staff. This group has close connections with the CIG, through cross representation of members, and reports back on progress and developments. ▪ Research projects were undertaken during the last action plan period, focused on research staff precarity, such as the review of our redeployment process (resulting in a change in name and process) and policy and Long-Term Research staff (resulting in a network - https://edin.ac/3y6Kuqy), and publication of outputs. <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p>

- A secondment project carried out a review of our Redeployment Register and resulted in the creation of clearer guidelines for recruiters. We also produced a blog post to encourage use of the resource (<https://edin.ac/3rZofSR>)
- The Research Staff Hub now includes support for Inductions, P&DRs and various networks and societies as support for researchers that managers can signpost to. (<https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/>)
- The Code of Practice for the Management and Career Development of research staff was updated in 2022, to reflect changes in the Concordat, the University and the sector. The Code of Practice is a useful document to encourage conversations between managers and their researchers at different stages. (<https://edin.ac/2pkjVgf>)

Researchers

- New Staff Meet-Ups were piloted October 2022-March 2023 as a collaboration between IAD and HR, to provide dedicated induction support to all new staff. They are run as both online and in person events, signposting to university on boarding support and Induction support via the Research Staff Hub (<https://edin.ac/3UdZtL1>)
- The Research Staff Hub has developed best practice materials and links to information that support researchers on their rights and responsibilities, being a researcher at Edinburgh, and international researchers and much more. (<https://edin.ac/3nqtBat>)
- A 2-year secondment project, working closely with our central HR, focused on providing researcher demographics; a review into our redeployment support, and completion of a research project, focusing on Long Term Research Staff (<https://edin.ac/3KbzFfS> - bottom of page)

<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 10 Days Professional Development entitlement is promoted to researchers via our new '10 days professional development' webpage on the Research Staff Hub, explaining how researchers might use these 10 days to best effect. (https://edin.ac/3TLVXI4) • A focus of the November 2022 Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) meeting was on the 10 Days and a short survey was distributed to the group with a few questions around supporting researchers with the 10 days entitlement in Schools/Colleges. This data gathering exercise will now be used to shape next steps. <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of the Postdoc Champion role across several Schools/College structures, with the development of a role descriptor to support Schools with this role. (https://edin.ac/3FG4WVx) ▪ A central post to develop training and support for research managers and leaders was approved in 2022 and will be recruited in 2023 ▪ Development of a Principal Investigator Career Conversations infographic which includes information to support PIs to have career conversations with their Research Staff, including what is expected and not expected, resources and example questions for those conversations (https://edin.ac/3zsYIF7) <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated and consistent careers support over the last two years through a part-time research staff career consultant, which is now moved to an open-ended post, with the recruitment of another part-time, open ended career post in progress as of March 2023
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Research Careers Tool, developed across the University, can be used in peer groups, mentoring conversations, or as part of annual review and is intended to support researchers in being more strategic in selecting activities that will further their careers. https://edin.ac/3z6Sfzo ▪ Piloting February – March 2023, 1:1s on building research strategy/profile for research staff and fellows looking to get specialist advice https://edin.ac/3xmsHxj ▪ Development of a suite of mentoring resources to support individuals to consider mentoring as a career development opportunity. To support these resources, we have piloted mentoring workshops and will roll these out further https://edin.ac/3jHyV4U ▪ Development of a new a set of SharePoint resources for interdisciplinary researchers at the University was launched in July 2022. There is also a Teams Channel, for all those who identify as interdisciplinary researchers at Edinburgh. https://uoesharepoint.com/sites/InterdisciplinaryResearch ▪ In March 2023, a new resource was developed to support the process of applying for fellowships. A Comprehensive Guide to Fellowship Applications provides information on the different types of fellowships, has guiding questions for self-reflection and covers the essentials of a compelling narrative for an application. This is now used as a basis for workshops and 1:1 discussions. https://edin.ac/3z6iwOl ▪ We developed a guide to support societies to run career themed events or events including a career-related activity. https://edin.ac/3KbDVMg
<p>Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result. (max 500 words)</p>	

The University has made impressive progress to date in implementing the principles of the Concordat and the range of cross-cutting activities demonstrates this progress. This has been achieved through a coordinated and inclusive approach, which in the first action plan period has predominately focused on building structures and mechanisms for communication, building networks and information sharing. The Research Staff Hub is one clear outcome of this, but it can also be seen through the setting up of a post doc champion network, the development of careers support and resources and in-depth work on redeployment and long-term research staff. Close connections and collaboration with researchers, Colleges, Schools and professional services have been central to this work.

We acknowledge that change is complex and takes time and that the development of underpinning structures and mechanisms is a first step in the process. Our work to date has also allowed us to identify the areas which require more in-depth focus and effort. Our Action Plan 2023-2025 reflects this, building on a strong foundation to deepen understanding and embed the principles across different areas of the University. Examples of this work will include a short-life working group on the 10 days professional development entitlement, development of training and support for research managers and leaders and in-depth work on mentoring. We'll also ensure, through cross- representation and communication, that we remain aligned to other relevant areas of work across the University, thereby strengthening our collective approach and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Our approach to this will build on what we have learned from the first action plan, that a joined-up approach, and robust, open communication are key to success. Deliverables have been updated for our 2023-2025 Action Plan to align with this approach.

The Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) has been instrumental in ensuring progress and providing colleagues with an opportunity to feed into developments and plans. This approach will be maintained and developed through our next action plan. A number of secondments have been effective in undertaking further research and development and allowed us to support several initiatives relevant to the Concordat.

Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period
(max 500 words)

As described above, our main objectives for the coming reporting period are to build on and develop from the structures and mechanisms set up as a result of the first action plan. We aim to do this through deepening our work into specific areas of the Concordat and identifying robust means to communicate and embed the outcomes of this work across different areas of the institution.

Once our action plan for the coming reporting period is finalised, this will be shared with the researcher community, via our Research Staff Hub and various communications, so that we are transparent in our approach and upfront about our plans. We will ensure that developments are communicated via our blog and newsletter and where appropriate will contact our Communications and Marketing Team to include in University level communications.

The Concordat Implementation Group will continue to meet to track progress of our action plan and the committee's broad representation will ensure we are continuing to support researchers at all stages of their careers. Our Short Life Working Group, around the 10 Days Professional Development, will allow us to see if this model of focussing on a specific area of the Concordat, as a smaller working group, with a remit and reporting, can be used for other areas of the Concordat.

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (*max 200 words*)

The Concordat's senior manager champion is based within the Institute for Academic Development (IAD). The IAD work closely with the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) on the writing of the action plan. The CIG includes a broad representation from across the University, with colleagues who support the writing of our action plan and implementation throughout the action plan period. The IAD and CIG agreed priorities for the institutional action plan, with the CIG providing feedback and comments based on local initiatives and priorities. Our Research Staff Societies have been consulted on the process and also asked for feedback, with any received incorporated into the process. The final action plan and report then goes to our Research Strategy Group for review and final sign off, before being published on our Research Staff Hub.

Signature on behalf of governing body: Research Strategy Group (RSG)

Contact for queries: Fiona Philippi (fiona.philippi@ed.ac.uk)

This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk