Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Action Plan 2025-2028

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Foreword

Fostering a strong and inclusive research environment is central to our mission as a University, as set out in our Strategy 2030. In 2024 we published our Research and Innovation Strategy in which we outline our commitment to improving and strengthening the research environment and career development at all stages. The Concordat is an integral part of this commitment. The 2025-2028 Action Plan is the third since we became a signatory to the revised Concordat in 2020 and it outlines a range of important initiatives aimed at implementation and expansion of our work to date.

Our Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) is a representative University-wide group which oversees the progress of Concordat initiatives, and supported the drafting of this plan. It is supported through an ecosystem of networks and communities from across the University, which play a crucial role in supporting research staff. Some of these structures, such as Postdoc/Research Staff champions networks, are a direct result of our Concordat work.

We are proud of what we have collectively achieved over the last two years and this work will be continued and strengthened through the next period. Crucially, we will proactively work to align this with other strategic work for researchers at the University, particularly with our Research Cultures Action Plan and initiatives. Coordination, fairness, professional development and visibility are at the heart of this work.

The development of this action plan was led by our Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and drafted in consultation with research staff and professional services colleagues and through our Concordat Implementation Group. I am grateful to all for their time, input and effort.

Professor Christina Boswell
Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise
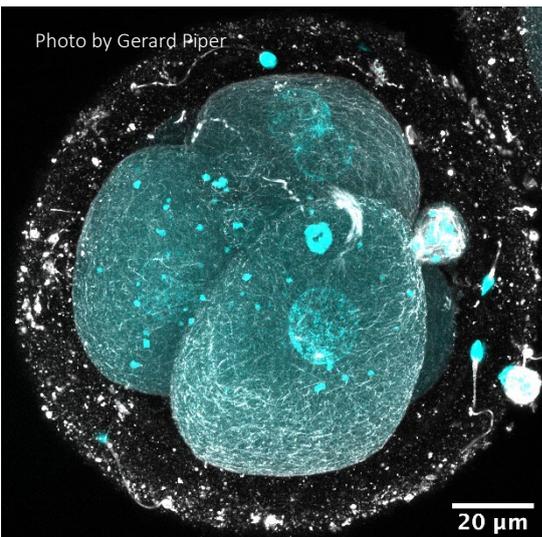25th March 2025

Photo by Gerard Piper
20 µm

Photo by Scott Waddell

Photo by Samuel Graham
58°
18.7°

Introduction

The University of Edinburgh became a signatory to the revised Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers in 2020 and published our first two-year action plan in March 2021 and our second in April 2023.

Our first two action plans 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, and embedding and supporting Concordat implementation across different areas of the university.

The outputs from our action plans are set out in the Concordat Reporting Section on the Research Staff Hub, and an internal Researcher Development Concordat Hub SharePoint space has been developed to support staff at the University, interested and involved in supporting the Concordat, to be kept up to date with progress and developments.

Dr Fiona Philippi
Head of Researcher Development

Nicola Cuthbert
Researcher Development Manager

Photo by Audrey Chagnot
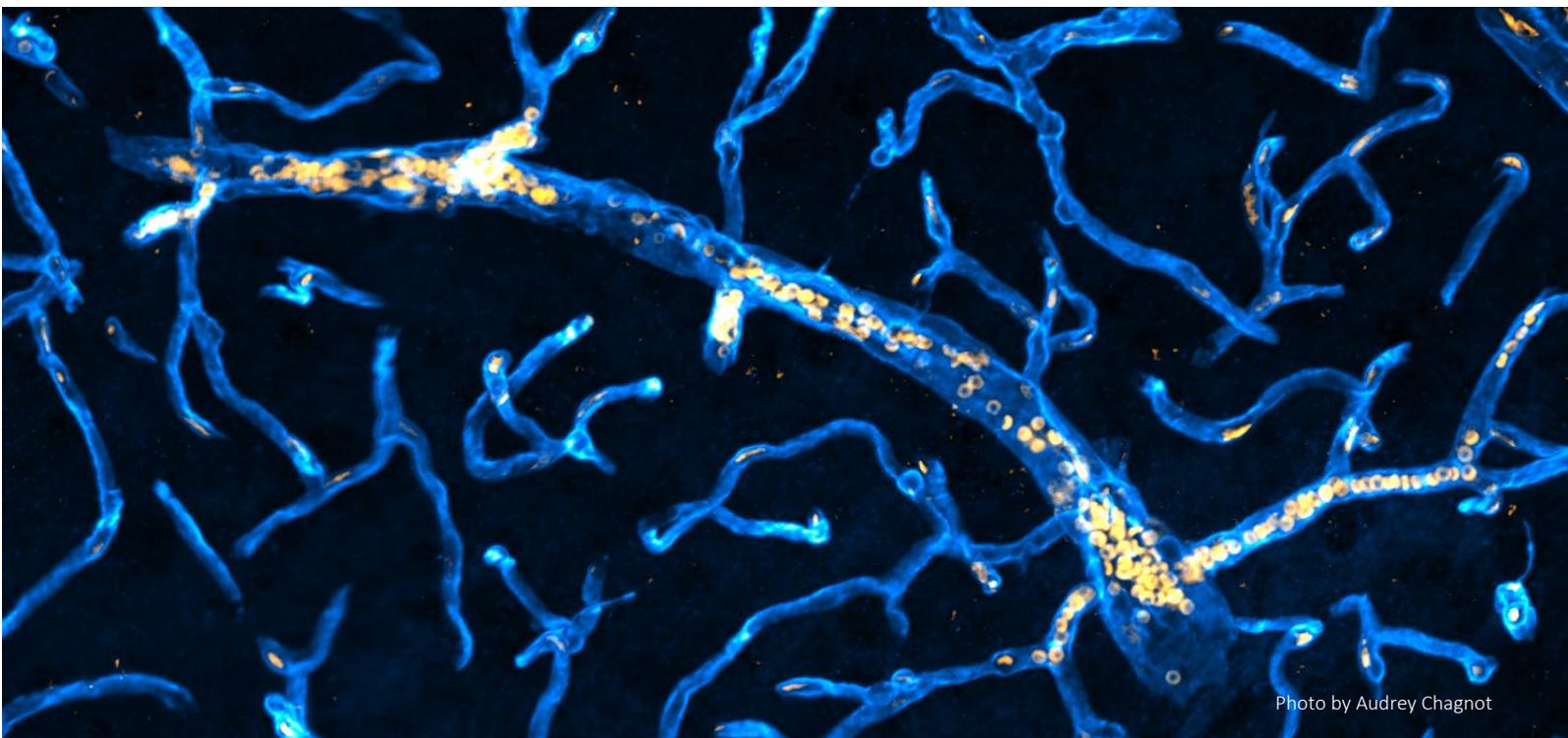
Existing initiatives at the University which support the implementation of the Concordat

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, which continue to be represented across all action plans, and are effective and critical to our Concordat work.

Effective collaboration and coordination with different groups and initiatives is vital, achieved by an ongoing focus on continued and open communication through cross memberships of groups, the sharing of processes and knowledge to achieve strategic objectives, and contributing to and supporting initiatives across the University that all support Concordat visibility and implementation.

1	Research Cultures Action and Delivery Plan
	The University Research Cultures Action plan (RCAP) 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. The implementation of RCAP is overseen by the Head of Research Cultures, based in the Institute for Academic Development (IAD).
2	**Research Staff Hub**
	The Research Staff Hub (RSH) was launched in 2021 and is a landing page for all research staff at the University of Edinburgh. Managed and maintained by the IAD, 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.
3	**10 Days Professional Development Support**
	The Concordat commitment around providing time, space, encouragement and opportunities for researchers to engage in 10 Days professional development is strongly supported at the University. The development of a webpage and video on the Research Staff Hub provides information and support for researchers to understand and become aware of what is available to them. A short life working group was instrumental in developing this support and creating awareness.
4	**Networks and representative structures**
	Postdoc/Research Staff and early-career researcher champion, representative and advisory roles have been established across the institution and are important drivers in the implementation of Concordat principles. Deans and Directors of Research Culture are establishing communities and networks in each College to provide a way for researchers to be 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.

Implementation and monitoring

The implementation of the Concordat action plan is coordinated by the Institute for Academic Development 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 Terms of Reference can be found on the Research Staff Hub.

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.

How the plan is structured

The obligations under the Concordat are set out in three clear principles:

1. Environment and Culture

2. Employment

3. Professional and Career Development

For each of these there are responsibilities for researchers, managers of researchers, institutions and funders.

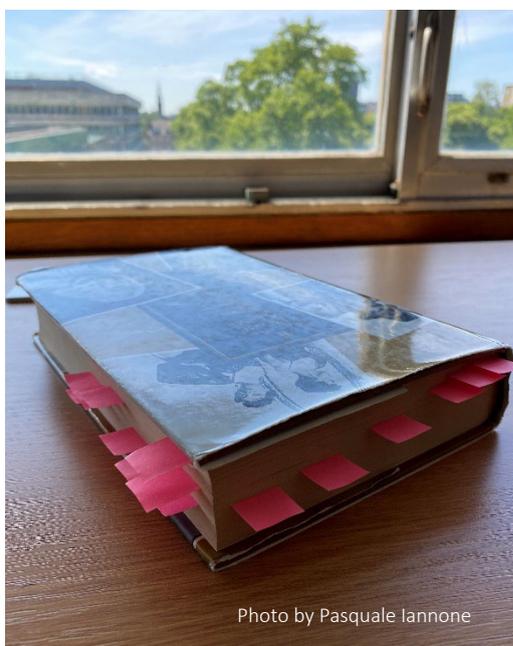Our actions for 2025-2028 are organised under these three principles.

Photo by Pasquale Iannone

Photo by Alexandra Florea

1 | Environment and Culture

Environment and Culture actions are strengthened by the University Research Cultures Action and Delivery Plan and the Research Cultures Forum, which provide a strong driver to support our work in this area. Proactive alignment of both action plans, alongside promoting initiatives and projects from other support services around the University ensures we are supporting a positive working environment and culture for research staff and creating efficiencies where appropriate.

Ref.	Action	Task and Deliverables	Owner(s)	Timescale
1.1	Support and influence University level Research Cultures Initiatives	Ensure an ongoing connection between institutional and local Research Cultures work and the Concordat, specifically focused on work supporting researchers. Use Concordat mechanisms to promote Research Cultures work that directly impacts and supports research staff, including signposting to and feeding into training, committees and initiatives that would be beneficial to researchers **Deliverables:** • Access data, via the 2025 UoE Research Cultures survey results, to identify researcher trends and needs, ensuring our Concordat initiatives are informed by this data. Updates on projects and initiatives, developed out of survey results, are communicated to researchers via relevant channels (Research Staff Hub, Concordat Implementation Group, Research Staff Societies, Postdoc/Research Staff Champions, etc) • Use the Research Cultures Forum and Teams channel, and champions and society/reps networks to promote and communicate Concordat activities/initiatives, to support promotion and communication across the University • College Research Culture plans will align with the Concordat commitments. This is through relevant committees, discussions and continued dialogue with College and School representatives. Promoting initiatives and projects accordingly and inputting Concordat developments where relevant	RCDG, CIG, IAD	Year 1 – Year 3

| 1.2 | Coordinated promotion of initiatives and projects aimed at researchers | Use a range of methods to communicate new University developments and initiatives available to researchers to support their role and working environment

Deliverables:
• Encourage researchers to engage with the HR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team's initiatives and support
   o Promote EDI Conversations, drop-in sessions, workshops and forums, and other new initiatives that would benefit research staff via Teams spaces, networking events and blog posts
   o Signpost to University EDI pages from the Research Staff Hub, highlighting topics and content specific for staff such as Neurodiversity, Anti-Racism, training on Interview Shadowing and informal spaces and subcommittees
• Ensure projects and initiatives provided by various Support Services, aimed at research staff, are communicated and promoted to researchers through the relevant channels | CIG, Support Services (IAD, HR EDI Team, SRS, EI, ERO) | Year 1 – Year 3 |
| 1.3 | Principal Investigators (PI) and Research Leaders Support | Further develop and embed central level training to support Principal Investigators (PIs) and research managers to understand their responsibilities and implement best practice for supporting researchers. Support local units to implement training and good practice sharing for managers of researchers to build positive environments

Deliverables:
• Develop an online training toolkit on "Fundamentals of supporting researchers", enabling managers and researchers to understand and be aware of their responsibilities under the Concordat and be able to implement best practice to build positive and developmental environments for research staff
• Develop and pilot a guide and resources for Schools/Centres/Institutes to implement local training for managers on supporting researchers and best practice sharing for creating positive environments for researchers | IAD, CIG, Schools | Year 1 – Year 3 |

1.4	Proactively increase visibility of Concordat and initiatives	Build an awareness of the Concordat and its initiatives supporting research staff through the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG). Continue to support Concordat implementation across Schools/Colleges, with members of CIG promoting the work of the Concordat [initiatives, projects, outputs] at University/local events (e.g., meetings, committees, UoE Open Research Conference, Good Research Practice Week) **Deliverables:** • Create standard text/materials/display screen visuals for CIG members to take to events, use to discuss at meetings, promote in local areas so that colleagues can update on the work of the Concordat across Edinburgh • Develop a system of CIG members updating on events attended, conversations had, and feedback/questions received, to ensure open lines of communication and opportunities for the development of new areas of work and initiatives • Add information to the Research Staff Hub on the work of the CIG in increasing visibility of Concordat and what the committee can support	CIG, IAD	Year 1
1.5	Research Staff Recognition	Supporting initiatives that recognise and value the work and diverse contributions of research staff **Deliverables:** • Promote Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW) activities occurring across the University organised by Schools/Colleges and research staff societies • Ensure the Research Staff Hub PAW webpage is up to date and ensuring the diversity of contributions by research staff • Promote and support Good Research Practice Week	CIG, Schools/ Colleges/ research staff societies, IAD	Year 1 – Year 3

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	Share best practice around Annual Reviews for Research Staff	Support Schools/Colleges in their review of the annual review process for research staff. Using the CIG, Teams spaces, HR Conversations Hub and our networks to disseminate findings, share practice and recommendations and support the process across the University **Deliverables:** • Develop core guidance and support for annual review process, working with HR and the Conversation Hub, to ensure information is updated and available • Co-ordinate exemplars of annual review processes • Update Research Staff Hub Annual Review webpage with developments, and local level initiatives, to ensure it's always relevant and up to date	HR, Colleges, IAD	Year 1
2.2	Induction Support for Postdocs	Scope out, develop and pilot an online induction module for new postdoctoral researchers which covers expectations, responsibilities and opportunities aligned to the Concordat principles. **Deliverables:** • Convene a small working group of Schools interested in co-creating, reviewing and piloting the module in their area • Explore the feasibility of making this online module mandatory for new postdocs • Evaluate the pilot with select Schools, revise as appropriate and roll out across the University • Add to the Research Staff Hub, Conversation Hub and share with Postdoc/Research Staff Champions to disseminate in their School/College and promote to PIs as new resource to support researcher inductions	IAD, CIG, Schools, Postdoc/ Research Staff Champions	Year 1 and Year 2
2.3	Academic Promotions	Academic colleagues, including those in research focussed roles should have access to clear support for career development and progression / promotion.	HR, IAD	Year 1 – Year 3

		Deliverables:		
		• Integrate citizenship and collegiality into the criteria for progression/promotion to encourage and reward research citizenship.		
		• Develop a suite of 'Exemplars for Research' in support of the revised framework of grading profiles		
		• Update 'Promotion Profiles' to include more recent promotion / career progression journeys of staff in research roles		
		• Information on promotions will be included in Induction materials – highlighting that promotion is open to all those in research focussed roles		
		• Review and revision of promotions guidance and promotions webpages to ensure these encourage applications from research focussed staff		
2.4	Contracts and Precarity	Continuing the University commitment to reduce, where possible, the numbers of staff employed on precarious contracts **Deliverables** • Implementation of a new reporting system which will highlight staff who have been on a series of fixed term contracts for 4 or more years. This report will alert the employing department and require them to move the employee to an OE or OE with Review Date contract unless there is an exceptional business reason for retention on an FTC • Ensure staff on FTC are aware of their employment rights and benefits through the development of a 'landing page' on the HR website. This will highlight entitlements such as annual leave, occupational sick pay, parental leave and maternity / paternity leave • Regular analysis of the FTC and OERD population and reporting through the University Governance structure • Identify and implement Improvements to the Redeployment Register to encourage those seeking redeployment and enable recruiters to identify and contact suitable candidates more easily. Implement reporting to assess usage and successful redeployments through the Register	HR	Year 1 – Year 3

| 2.5 | Well-Being and EDI | We aim to create an environment / culture that is inclusive, respectful and supportive for those undertaking research and those that enable it

Deliverables:
• To help identify and address poor and unacceptable workplace behaviours, the University will launch Report + Support, this system will enable staff to anonymously report incidences of Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination.
• Continued development of the Neuroinclusion SharePoint hub
• Evolve our EDI learning offer ensuring it provides a range of accessible learning opportunities designed to raise awareness and develop understanding.
• Review the University's Dignity and Respect policy | HR | Year 1 – Year 3 |

3 | Professional and Career Development

Professional Development is embedded throughout all our activities and in our Research Staff Hub. We 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	Mentoring & Coaching	Continue to build and grow mentoring and coaching support developed in 2023-2025 action plan, for research staff to consider 1:1 personalised support as an option to support career development **Deliverables:** • Evaluate the pilot Postdoc Mentoring Circles Programme [November 2024 – July 2025] and implement relevant changes based on evaluation, making it scalable • Develop exemplars of mentoring successes, from Mentors and Mentees • Review where mentoring and coaching support adds value into core IAD Research Staff and PI programmes: o Embed coaching and mentoring into IAD programmes as appropriate and work across the University to seek out opportunities for building coaching cultures and support professional development for internal coaches • Further develop resources to support local mentoring initiatives (e.g. handbook template, workshop outline etc.) and add these to IAD Mentoring Resources webpages	IAD	Year 1 and Year 2
3.2	Career Destinations	Undertake a short-term project, as part of our Concordat Implementation Group, looking at different options of collecting data on what jobs /sectors researchers go to after end of contract. Use data gathered to inform IAD and Schools/Colleges in tailoring training, development and advice to support researchers considering their next career move **Deliverables:** • CIG Short Life Working Group project, looking into options for obtaining this career	CIG, IAD	Year 2

		destination information, creating question set, and correspondence around project objectives, to support outcomes • Communicate with other institutions to share practice and knowledge, considering options to collaborate if appropriate/feasible. Coordinate progress with the SFC, via the Research Cultures Collaboration manager, to support our drive to collecting this data, linking up with other institutions as necessary and identifying wider support in the sector • Report to CIG on progress and implement SLWG recommendations		
3.3	Career Development and Support	Continue to strengthen and provide value and impact for research staff through our dedicated career guidance. Build on and further develop work supporting diverse career paths and Narrative CVs **Deliverables:** • Develop a Narrative CV support Framework, with different options for Schools/Colleges, Research Staff Societies/Postdoc Champions to engage with this support, either at a local level or centrally, via IAD • Deliver focused panel events and develop resources and information to support knowledge and awareness around different career options. • Continue to run the annual Careers Month (following successful pilot in 2024), to provide a focused month which includes career themed briefing sessions and 1:1 career consultation support from qualified career guidance counsellors • Offer 30 minute 'Development Conversations' to research and academic staff at the University, to signpost and highlight support available and options to access	IAD	Year 1 – Year 3
3.4	10 Days Professional Development	Build on the work of our 2023/2024 Short Life Working Group, raising awareness and visibility of the 10 days Professional Development entitlement, work will now focus on managing implementation, monitoring/recording and monitoring effectiveness of accessing the 10 Days, across the researcher community	Schools, Colleges, CIG, IAD	Year 1 – Year 3

		Deliverables:		
		- Work on supporting Principal Investigators (PIs) and Research Leaders to have conversations around the 10 Days Professional Development entitlement with their researchers. Developing guides and resources to support these conversations, working with HR to update the Conversations Hub, to support quality conversations - Working with Deans of Research Culture to add reference to and support around the 10 Days Professional Development, into annual review paperwork and local School/College research cultures initiatives - CIG members briefed on the support available for PIs/Research Leaders, around having conversations on the 10 Days Professional Development with their researchers, with information added to the Research Staff Hub on to who to contact in the CIG, based on School/College location, if PIs/Research Leaders require this support or more information in this area - Work with Schools/Colleges and learning from relevant InFrame projects to ensure that reference to the 10 Days Professional Development is included in relevant local processes		
3.5	Researcher Profiles	Through the 'Roles of Profiles' Information Services project, aim to understand the current usage, needs and requirements of staff profiles and systems, providing recommendations to staff looking to promote and showcase outputs **Deliverables:** - Through analysis, surveys and interviews, understand staff needs for publishing online content and explore options to use and build university system functionality - Promote outcomes and recommendations to staff for effectively using profiles to promote work and outputs, highlighting the value individual staff profiles can provide	Information Services	Year 1

Images in this action plan were submitted as part of a Research image competition held by the IAD.
We are delighted to be able to showcase some of the research going on across the University.

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH