

**Annual report on activities to align with the Concordat to Support the Career
Development of Researchers 2022/2023
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Introduction

This report covers activities undertaken at the University as part of being a signatory (and therefore committing to the obligations) of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) - referred herein as 'the Concordat'. (See Appendix 1 for background and context to the Concordat).

Adoption of the principles and standards for the management of research staff as described within the Concordat is an expectation for receipt of UKRI funding. Furthermore, it is a requirement of the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR), which the University has held since 2014. At present, the HREiR and Concordat activities are aligned into a single action plan, with one external review and reporting process (managed through [VitaE](#)) and both demonstrate that we are committed to supporting careers of research staff.

This report has been produced to summarise the outcomes of the previous [2021-2023 Action Plan](#) and the formation of, and commencement of activities for the [2023-2026 Action Plan](#) (with the action planning, delivery and reporting process moving from a 2 year cycle to a 3 year one.)

It is a requirement of the Concordat that the University reports annually to its governing body on strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plan and progress relating to our adoption of the Concordat, and that this report is subsequently made publicly available.

Background

Operational oversight for the Researcher Development Concordat falls under the aegis of the Researcher Development Group (RDG), a formally constituted sub-group of the University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation and External Relations). The RDG includes in its membership representatives of Research and Innovation Leadership Group, research staff and academic staff, People and Organisational Development, Graduate School and Careers and Employability. .

Review and Successful Completion of Action Plan 2021-2023

In June 2023, as part of the 10 year review for the HREiR award, we were required to present the outcomes of the 2021-2023 action plan along with our proposed 2023-2026 action plan to an external peer review panel who, themselves, fed into the UK panel.

With recommendations from the panel incorporated into our report and future plan, in October 2023 we were then confirmed as retaining the award for a further 3 years and given the 'green light' to commence activity on this next action plan. (Press Release [here](#)).

Strategic objectives:

There were 6 overarching objectives for this cycle:

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
6. Building an inclusive culture.

Implementation plan, progress and measures of success

The published action plan can be viewed [here](#). (Please note, The formatting requirements are those required of the HREiR award)

We drew heavily on the national Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) for measuring and reporting success against our actions. However, our response rate to the survey was low (albeit in line with the sector averages) so this data was augmented with qualitative evidence gathered through focus groups and similar.

To note, there were a small number of actions that needed to be carried over into the new action plan either because they were not fully achieved in the previous timescale or because further valuable actions had been identified.

Current Action Plan 2023-2026 (Commenced November 2023)

Strategic objectives:

Specific objectives for this period's action plan were discussed and agreed through the following mechanisms:

- Consultation with RDG, Staff Fora and wider stakeholders, including feedback received from research staff and their managers
- Carry over of any remaining or additional actions from 2021-2023 action plan
- Recommendations received from the national panel
- Discussed and agreed through University Research and Innovation Committee

For the upcoming three year period the aim has been to create a plan that delivers tangible benefits for all research staff, is aligned with University strategy and plans, is feasible within existing resources, minimises duplication, and maximises synergy with other relevant concordats, charters and initiatives. The latter point is also influenced by the sector wide reviews of bureaucracy and concordats and charters. The key strategic drivers for our action plan are:

- New university R&I Strategy
- Athena Swan, REC and other commitments to EDI
- Synergy with other concordats e.g. KE and Research Integrity
- New university People Strategy
- Gap analysis of university provision against requirements of the Concordat.

Taking all of these factors into account, the following priority areas have been agreed for the next 3 years:

1. **Developing research talent:** Recruitment, development, progression and next job
2. **Enhancing research culture** through EDI, Engagement and Wellbeing
3. Using the concept of '**Impact through Knowledge Exchange**' to support research staff experience and development.

Implementation plan, progress and measures of success

The plan will be delivered following a number of key guiding principles in order to maximise impact and success:

- There will be an emphasis on the role of the PI (and leaders) in achieving objectives in priority areas
- Mentoring will be explored as an approach to deliver outcomes for individuals (to include advocacy and sponsorship particularly linked to EDI)
- We will continue to promote the new resources developed in the last cycle, and ensure that all Research Staff are encouraged to proactively take up the new opportunities for career development featured in the upcoming cycle
- Stakeholders detailed in the implementation plan will be clear on their obligations and that it is a whole institutional approach to delivery, involving local and central activity.
- Career stage fora will be key to success of the plan through direct engagement with their communities i.e. Professors Forum, Readers/Associate Professors Forum, Researchers Network and Research Staff Forum.

Strategic Objectives and Implementation Plan 2023-26

Our strategic objectives and implementation plan to meet the obligations of the Concordat (as approved by Vitae, the external managing organisation) over the next three years, are outlined below:

Strategic objectives and implementation plan 2023-26

(NB - There are only 5 actions that are due to have been completed to date, within this 3 year plan, and these have been RAG rated in the following table as at today's date .)

*Red = at risk of failing to deliver action, Amber = behind schedule but plan is in place to deliver prior to reporting deadline, Green = complete or on schedule to be complete by action deadline, Blank = no work required to be commenced as yet

Action
Priority 1 - Developing research talent: Recruitment, development, progression and next job
Delivery of Research Staff cohort programme
Carry out a consultation on the possible benefits and implications of including technicians as beneficiaries
Design through consultation and then deliver specific training for PIs on how to support their Research Staff to excel and progress
Awareness raising and skills development in preparing Narrative CVs/Resumé for Researchers
Enhance induction offer through localised school and small group induction sessions.
Launch a post-doc 'drop-in' service for advice, guidance and signposting
Review potential for open-ended contracts and review how redeployment process works for Research Staff
Pilot an internal work shadowing scheme for Research Staff with a view to offering this more widely
Pilot 'Postdoc pool' approach to maximise opportunities for current researchers on fixed term contracts to continue at UoP
Create an alumni group for ex Research Staff and develop engagement group
Developing networking skills for researcher careers. Delivered in partnership with Researchers14 .
Deliver the 'Mentoring Circles' project to upskill managers of researchers in facilitating mentoring circles.
Engaging with University wide plans for mentoring to ensure relevance to Research Staff & developing on the 21-23 action to explore mentoring, sponsorship and advocacy particularly linked to EDI (a working group has been set up by RDG)
Priority 2 - Enhancing Research Culture
Conduct focus groups to understand the difference between 'no shows' at training events between male and female academic staff.
Delivery of Mental Health at Work First Aid training for PIs to better support their Research Staff and creation of a set of guidelines and resources for

Pls.'
Delivery of the 'Coaching for Research Success' project to upskill managers of researchers in their coaching skills to support their research staff.
Build concordat requirements into internal funding schemes - exploratory action, leading to impact action for yrs 2 or 3
Welcome scheme for new Research Staff from outside UK
Consider broadening scope of beneficiaries in line with Technician Commitment - initial scoping in yr 1 to expand to actions in yrs 2&3
Reinvigorate the communication and training for managers on 10 days development
Carry out pulse surveys to gain feedback from researchers and managers
Include a report and review of researcher engagement as a standing agenda item in RDG meetings.
Priority 3 - Impact through KE
Undertake exploratory work to look at potential learning points from KTP programmes that can be applied to postdoc professional development and careers support. Apply Research Staff lens to KE Concordat actions around skills, induction and resources
Upskilling Research Staff on research impact
Engagement with the Enterprise Programme for the benefit of Research Staff

Appendix 1: Background and context

The background information and the summary of the University's approach to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is detailed here for ease of reference and as context to the main paper .

Background

The [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#), commonly known as the Researcher Development Concordat, is an agreement between stakeholders to improve the employment and support for researchers and researcher careers in higher education in the UK.

In 2008, the sector launched the original Concordat which aimed to provide a single, unambiguous statement of the expectations and responsibilities of research funders and institutions with respect to the management of researchers. The original 2008 Concordat was refreshed and relaunched following extensive consultation during 2019. This new version of the concordat brought with it, for the first time, a requirement for institutions to report formally to their governing body on their approach to and progress towards the Concordat.

The Concordat also provides the UK with the means to meet the requirements of European Commission European Charter and Code, through the European HR Excellence in Research Award (UK HREiR). This evidence shows our commitment to the career development of researchers to potential employees as well as strengthening bids for EU funding that require evidence of a commitment to researcher development.

UoP is one of 89 HEIs that are signatory to the Concordat.

It sets out three clear principles of environment and culture, employment, and professional and career development. The principles are underpinned by obligations for the four key stakeholder groups, funders, institutions, researchers and managers of researchers, to realise the aims of the Concordat.

The Concordat outlines seven specific responsibilities for signatories. They are:

1. Raise the visibility of the Concordat and champion its Principles within their organisation at all levels.
2. Identify a senior manager champion and associated group with relevant representation from across the organisation with responsibility for annual review and reporting on progress.
3. For organisations employing researchers, ensure that they are formally represented in developing and monitoring organisational efforts to implement the Concordat Principles.
4. Undertake a gap analysis to compare their policies and practice against the Concordat Principles.
5. Draw up and publish an action plan within a year of signing the Concordat.
6. Set up processes for systematically and regularly gathering the views of researchers they fund or employ, to inform and improve the organisation's approach to and progress on implementing the Concordat.

7. Produce an annual report to their governing body or equivalent authority, which includes their strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plan and progress, which subsequently is publicly available

The University's approach to embedding the Researchers Concordat and its principles

Operational oversight for the Researcher Development Concordat falls under the aegis of the Researcher Development Group (RDG), a formally constituted sub-group of the University Research and Innovation Committee, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation and External Relations). Representation is vertically integrated through the career lifecycle, with the convenors of the Research Staff Forum (who are Research Staff), Researchers' Network (early- to mid-career academic staff), Readers'/Associate Professors' Forum and Professors' Forum all formally represented in the membership, together with representation from the Graduate School. Furthermore, there is representation from the Athena Swan core group, and the University's Equality and Diversity Unit, ensuring good communication between those groups and their respective action plans. Currently, the Director of CPD (RIS), has responsibility for driving progress on the Researcher Development Concordat, working closely with members of RDG and other colleagues across the University to implement actions.