

A Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

We, the undersigned members of the UK research community, are proud of our country's long tradition of research excellence, both for its own sake and for the wider benefits which it brings to the health, economy and happiness of our nation. We believe that the provision of well-trained, talented and motivated researchers is essential to the continuation of this excellence. In order to strengthen further the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK, we encourage the adoption of the following key principles:

1. Recognition of the importance of recruiting and selecting researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.
2. Researchers are recognised and valued as an essential part of their employing organisation's human resource.
3. Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.
4. The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and life long learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.
5. Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and life long learning.
6. Diversity and equality are promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.
7. The sector and all stakeholders should undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

CONSULTATION QUESTION

1. Are these the right guiding principles?

Signatories

The expected parties to this Concordat are:

Universities UK
GuildHE
National Research Staff Association
Research Councils UK¹
The Royal Society
The British Academy
The Royal Academy of Engineering
The Wellcome Trust
Association of Medical Research Charities
Universities Personnel Association
Higher Education Funding Council for England
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
Scottish Funding Council
Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland

This Concordat sets out the expectations of the signatories for the career management of researchers. It is designed to be of use to all those with an interest in research careers, including employers of researchers and researchers themselves.

¹ The Arts and Humanities Research Council
The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
The Economic and Social Research Council
The Medical Research Council
The Natural Environment Research Council
The Science and Technology Facilities Council

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Definitions

Researcher

Individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose.

Employers of researchers

Those public or private institutions or organisations that employ individuals to conduct research.

Research managers

Those responsible for managing and supporting researchers, including:

Heads of Schools, Directors of Research and Principal and Co Investigators.

Supporters of researchers

Those responsible for supporting researchers, in the administrative processes related to research, including:

Research administrators, finance officers, HR staff.

Funders of researchers

Those institutions and organisations which fund public and private research and researchers employed in institutions undertaking such research.

CONSULTATION QUESTION
2. Are these the correct definitions?

Introduction

1. In 1996, with the aim of providing a general reference point for good practice across the UK higher education sector, the UK Research Councils, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (now Universities UK), the Standing Committee of Principals (now GuildHE) and others signed a '*Concordat on Contract Research Staff Career Management*'.
2. The Concordat set standards for the career management and conditions of employment of researchers in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on fixed-term or similar contracts who were funded through research grants or analogous schemes. It provided a general reference point for good practice across the UK higher education sector.
3. Since publication of the 1996 Concordat, a number of relevant developments have occurred in the higher education sector, including new legislation affecting staff on fixed term contracts, amendments to UK research councils' grant terms and conditions, and the introduction of a European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. In response to these, and to improving practice in research career management, researchers' expectations of their career development and working conditions have grown.
4. To reflect this progress, and the growing awareness across Europe of the benefits which the effective management of research careers can bring, Research Councils UK (RCUK) convened a UK higher education sector working group to draft a new Concordat that could build on the 1996 version and take a broad approach to enhancing the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers.
5. The development of the draft Concordat contained in this document has been endorsed by the UK Research Base Funders' Forum which represents the major public and private funders of public research in the UK. Development of the Concordat has included wide consultation and engagement with the sector. The consultation process has been invaluable in ensuring the Concordat is feasible and fit for purpose.
6. The new Concordat is designed to provide a single, unambiguous statement about effective practice in the support and management of research careers and to demonstrate internationally the high standards that can be expected by researchers in the UK.
7. The new Concordat consists of:
 - A set of key principles for the future support and management of research careers and, under each principle, an explanation of how it may best be embedded into institutional practice;
 - A clear statement of the signatories' collective expectations for the support and management of researchers.

Recruitment and Selection

Principle 1

The importance of recruiting and selecting researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research is clearly recognised.

8. All members of the UK research community should understand that researchers are chosen primarily for their ability to advance research at an institution (and only secondarily for other attributes or achievements).
9. Employers should strive to attract excellence and respect diversity (see Principle 6). Recruitment and selection procedures should be informative, transparent, open to all qualified applicants regardless of background and not unnecessarily prohibitive in relation to the requirements of the post.
10. Research posts should only be advertised as a fixed-term post where there is a recorded and justifiable reason as laid down in the Fixed Term Employee Regulations (2002).
11. To assure fairness, consistency and candidates' potential for success, recruitment and progression panels should reflect diversity and those undertaking recruitment and selection should have received relevant recent training. As the recruitment process is an important way in which researchers may assess their potential for further career development, unsuccessful applicants should be given appropriate feedback if they request it.
12. The level of pay or grade for researchers should be determined according to the requirements of the post, consistent with the pay and grading arrangements of the research organisation.

CONSULTATION QUESTION

3. Are any additional requirements for recruitment and select procedures needed to ensure that the best researchers are employed to promote excellence in research?

Recognition and value

Principle 2

Researchers are recognised and valued as an essential part of their organisation's human resources.

13. Employers are encouraged to value and afford equal treatment to all researchers, regardless of whether they are employed on a fixed term or similar contract, and not limit employees to identification with an individual research project of finite duration. In particular, employers should ensure that the development of key researchers is not undermined by instability of employment contracts.
14. Commitment by everyone involved to improving the stability of employment conditions for researchers and implementing and abiding by the principles and terms laid down in the Fixed Term Employee Regulations (2002) and JNCHES guidance on the use of fixed-term contracts will provide benefits for researchers, research managers, and their organisations.
15. Where resources allow, organisational systems should support continuity of employment for researchers, such as funding between grants, other schemes for supporting time between grant funding, or systems for redeploying researchers within organisations. Grant funders should make it a priority to consider how their policies and funding can be enhanced to help employers to achieve this objective.
16. Pay progression for researchers should be transparent and in accordance with procedures agreed between the relevant trade unions and the employers nationally and locally. In HEIs, pay progression will be in accordance with the Framework Agreement, though recognising the flexibility that institutions have in implementing the Framework.
17. Researchers need to be offered opportunities to develop their own careers as well as having access to additional pay progression. Promotion opportunities should be transparent, effectively communicated and open to all staff. It is helpful if clear career frameworks for early stage researchers are outlined in organisational HR strategies.
18. Research managers should be strongly encouraged to accept their share of the responsibility for the active performance management, including career development guidance, and supervision of those who work in their teams.
19. Employers should ensure that research managers are made aware of, and understand, their responsibilities for the management of researchers and should provide training opportunities, including equality and diversity training, to support research managers in doing this. Institutions will wish to consider how research leaders' performance in these areas is developed, assessed and rewarded, and how effectively this supports good research management.

CONSULTATION QUESTION

4. Will this strengthen the retention of key research staff, support their development, and enhance the value placed on researchers by their institutions?

Support and Career Development

Principle 3

Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

20. It is recognised that positions of permanent employment are limited in the UK research and academic communities and that not all researchers will be able to obtain such a position. It is, therefore, imperative that researcher positions in the UK are attractive in themselves (and not, for example, solely as potential stepping stones to permanent academic positions). This requires that they provide career development which is comparable to, and competitive with, other employment sectors.
21. There are a wide variety of career paths open to researchers, and the ability to move between different paths is key to a successful career. It is recognised that this mobility brings great benefit to the UK economy and organisations will, therefore, wish to be confident that their culture supports a broad-minded approach to researcher careers and that all career paths are valued equally.
22. Employers, funders and researchers should recognise that researchers need to develop transferable skills, delivered through embedded training, in order to stay competitive in external job markets. Therefore, as well as the necessary training and appropriate skills and competencies to carry out a funded project, researchers also need support to develop the research, subject-specific, communication and other professional skills that they will need to be both effective researchers and highly-skilled professionals in whatever field they choose to enter.
23. All employers will wish to review how their staff can access professional, independent advice on career management in general, particularly the prospect of employment beyond their immediate discipline base, or offering training and placements to broaden awareness of other fields and sectors.
24. Researchers benefit from clear systems that help them to plan their career development. Employers and funding bodies should therefore promote career progression by ensuring that their own policies and processes for promotion and reward are transparent and clearly stated and that all researchers are aware of local and national career development strategies.

Principle 4

The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and life long learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

25. Employers and funders will wish to consider articulating the skills that should be developed at each stage of staff development frameworks and should encourage researchers to acquire and practise those skills. For example, researchers may be given the opportunity to manage part of the budget for a project, or to act as a mentor or advisor to other researchers and students.
26. Employers also draw up a specific career development strategy for researchers at all stages of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, which should include the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers. All researchers should be made familiar with such provisions and arrangements.
27. Research managers should actively encourage researchers to take on developmental activity, so far as is possible within the project. It should be stressed that developmental activity can often have a direct impact on the success of the project, by distributing

work, taking advantage of individual strengths and talents, and increasing the skill and effectiveness of researchers in key areas such as writing for publication or communicating with a wider audience. Funding bodies should acknowledge that the training of researchers is a significant contribution to research output and should encourage employers and mentors to adopt these practices.

28. Researchers should be empowered by having a realistic understanding of, and information about, their own career development and career direction options as well as taking personal responsibility for their choices at the appropriate times. Employers should introduce evaluation/appraisal systems for all researchers for assessing their professional performance on a regular basis and in a transparent manner. It is important that researchers have access to honest and transparent advice on their prospects for success in their preferred career.
29. Employers will wish to ensure that developmental activities open to researchers include preparation for academic practice. Employers should take measures to ensure broad compatibility of CPD schemes as far as possible, so that researchers are not unduly disadvantaged when moving from one employer to another.
30. Employers can often benefit if researchers have an input into policy and practice through appropriate representation.

CONSULTATION QUESTION

5. Will this provide researchers with the appropriate transferable skills and flexibility to be successful in any chosen career?

6. Will it enhance career development for all researchers?

Researchers' Responsibilities

Principle 5

Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and life long learning.

31. Researchers are employed to advance knowledge and should exercise and develop a faculty for independent, honest and critical thought.
32. Nonetheless, researchers should also be frequently reminded that the skills and achievements required to move on from a research position may not be the same as the skills and achievements which they displayed to reach that position.
33. Each researcher should recognise that the primary responsibility for managing and pursuing their career is theirs, and they should actively seek out opportunities for learning and development in order to further that career, such as the UK GRAD mentoring courses.
34. Researchers should ensure that their career development requirements and activities are regularly discussed, monitored, and evaluated throughout the year in discussion with their research manager and that they commit themselves fully to all such activities.

CONSULTATION QUESTION

7. Do researchers have other responsibilities?

8. How else can researchers contribute to their own careers and development?

Diversity and Equality

Principle 6

Diversity and equality are promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

35. The UK legislative framework outlaws discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, race or religion and requires public bodies to take positive steps to promote equality, based on evidence and priorities, and to develop specific schemes and action plans related to gender, race and disability to address specific issues of under-representation or lack of progression.
36. As is the case for society as a whole, UK research will benefit from increasing equality and diversity in the recruitment and retention of researchers. The Concordat encourages the recruitment and retention of researchers from the widest pool of available talent, including those from diverse backgrounds.
37. It should be emphasised that the demanding nature of research careers has a disproportionate effect on certain groups, for example women hoping to start families. We strongly recommend that all members of the UK research community actively address the disincentives and indirect obstacles to retention and progression in research careers which may disproportionately impact on some groups more than others.
38. Employers should ensure that the working conditions for researchers provide the flexibility necessary for successful research performance in line with legal requirements. Employers should recognise that for parents and others who have taken career breaks, worked part-time, or taken atypical routes into research, the “early career” period may be prolonged, and may be a time where the risk of attrition from their research path is most acute. Working conditions should allow both female and male researchers to combine family and work, children and career.
39. Flexible working should be the default provision unless it can be shown to be impossible in relation to the proposed research.
40. Employers should aim for a representative balance of gender, disability, ethnicity and age at all levels of staff, including at supervisory and managerial level. This should be achieved on the basis of a transparent equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at all subsequent career stages. Diversity should be reflected on selection and evaluation committees. What is ‘representative’ will vary according to the nature of the institution and the academic research subject, but institutions should aim to ensure that the percentage of applicants, and ultimately appointments, from a particular group to any given level should reflect the percentage in the available pool at the level immediately below.
41. Account should also be taken of the personal circumstances of groups of researchers. Examples would include researchers who have responsibility for young children or adult dependants, researchers for whom English is not a first language, older or younger researchers, or researchers with disabilities and long-term health issues. Employers and funders should change policies or practices which directly or indirectly disadvantage such groups.
42. All managers of research should ensure that measures exist at every institution through which discrimination, bullying or harassment can be reported and addressed without adversely affecting the careers of innocent parties.

43. Employers should also consider participation in schemes such as the Athena SWAN Charter, the Juno Project and other initiatives aimed at promoting diversity in research careers.

CONSULTATION QUESTION

9. Does this ensure sufficient attention from employers and funders to promoting diversity, above existing practices and legal requirements?

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Monitoring and Review

Principle 7

The sector and all stakeholders should undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

44. The implementation of the Concordat's core principles will lead to greater integration of researchers into the mainstream management and career development structures of their employing organisations. The aim of this section is to promote implementation through a collective commitment to monitoring its progress.
45. Under public sector equality schemes, employers are required to monitor equality and diversity indicators for their researchers. This section focuses on the co-ordination and enhancement of existing information collection and not on the creation of additional data. There is a strong presumption that in implementing the Concordat significant emphasis will be placed on the sharing of good practice between institutions and on the use of existing data and information sources to provide evidence of its impact.
46. The signatory funders will consider amending their terms and conditions of grants to include the expectation that the Research Organisations they fund will adopt the principles of the revised Concordat.
47. Examples of possible information sources for reviewing progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers may be:

Researchers:

- Attitude surveys e.g. by the NRSA, UCU etc which should be widely published

Employers:

- The monitoring of Codes of Practice, HR strategies, positive duty actions etc. and use of self assessment tools e.g. the UPA Self Assessment tool, EQFM, iIP, and surveys such as CROS and ASSET which could be monitored across the sector

Funders:

- The analysis of HESA data on the employment of academic staff
- UCEA biennial Recruitment and Retention survey

Government

- Health of Disciplines: Annual Report to the UK Research Base Funders' Forum
- Researchers: What is the Situation? Annual Report to the UK Research Base Funders' Forum

These sources could / should be brought together in a triennial report by RCUK to assess overall progress and implementation of the Concordat.

48. Any collection of data will be undertaken in accordance with the Higher Education Regulation Review Group 'Higher Education Concordat on quality assurance arrangements and data collection'.

CONSULTATION QUESTION

10. How can the implementation of the Concordat be effectively monitored?

11. Are these suggested information sources appropriate?

12. Will they add a disproportionate burden to employers and funders? Is a three-yearly report appropriate?