



Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Second Annual Report 2021-22

Period covered	1 September 2021 – 31 August 2022
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Date considered by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and recommended for approval and publication	20 September 2022
Date considered and recommended to Court via Senate by Executive Team	11 October 2022
Date considered and recommended for approval by Senate	16 November
Date approved by Court	1 December 2022
Date of publication	6 December 2022

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: Second Annual Report

A. Introduction

1. The University of Strathclyde is strongly committed to supporting the professional and career development of our Researchers, becoming a signatory to the [revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) (“Researcher Development Concordat”) in June 2020. Strathclyde has held, and biennially retained, the EU HR Excellence in Research Award since 2011, which recognises this commitment to the original and revised Researcher Development Concordats.
2. The aims of the Researcher Development Concordat strongly align with Strathclyde’s strategic ambitions addressed within Vision 2025 and the People Strategy, as well as our institutional commitments to national frameworks such as the Research Integrity and Knowledge Exchange Concordats.
3. This Annual Report to University Court, as required by the Researcher Development Concordat, presents Strathclyde’s strategic objectives and measures of success for delivering the obligations of this Concordat. It also provides a summary of progress for the 2021 – 2022 period since the first Annual Report in November 2021 and the implementation plans for the forthcoming year.

A.1. Background

4. The Researcher Development Concordat recognises the critical role of research and innovation in delivering the UK’s ambitious economic and industrial strategies aiming to set the gold standard in Researcher Development and, in turn, allowing this to be used as an internationally competitive advantage. It sits alongside eleven other initiatives and frameworks – including the [Research Integrity](#) and [Knowledge Exchange](#) Concordats, [Athena SWAN](#) and the [Technicians Commitment](#) - which support the Research Community in implementing the good practices which shape the research landscape and culture.
5. Universities UK oversee the UK wide implementation of this Concordat and there is substantial sector support with more than 100 Universities and Research Institutes so far becoming signatories. In addition, major funding organisations, including UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Scottish Funding Council, Wellcome, Cancer Research UK and the Royal Academy for Engineering, are signatories and have committed to embedding the Concordat Principles within their funding award and review processes.
6. This revised agreement builds on the original Researcher Development Concordat published in 2008, with strengthened expectations and distinct obligations on Institutional support for Researchers¹ and their Managers. The Principles of this Concordat - *Environment and Culture*; *Employment*; and *Professional and Career Development* – reflect the increasingly prominent, sector-wide priorities of People and Culture which are also addressed in the [BEIS Research & Development People & Culture Strategy](#) and [UK Innovation Strategy](#), as well as the [SFC’s Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#) and [UKRI’s 2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan](#).

¹ Researchers are defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed specifically for this purpose; most staff within this definition are often referred to as ‘postdoctoral researchers’.

B. The Researcher Development Concordat at Strathclyde

B.1 Leadership

7. Professor Tim Bedford (Associate Principal Research and Innovation) is Strathclyde's Senior Academic Concordat Champion supported by Dr Emma Compton-Daw (Researcher Development Manager, OSDU) as the Institutional Concordat Champion and Dr Maria Weikum (Researcher Development Concordat Officer, OSDU).
8. The Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG), chaired by Professor Billy Kerr (Deputy Associate Principal Research and Knowledge Exchange), provides strategic oversight and advice on the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat. Two Working Groups (*Research Culture* and *Development and Recognition*) provide development and execution of specific approaches and solutions in these areas. In addition, a strong focus is placed on ensuring links with other Concordat stakeholder groups, as well as related institutional projects and initiatives. All committees and groups have representation from all Faculties and all Professional Services units currently supporting Researchers, as well as Researchers and Managers of Researchers themselves.
9. Regular progress reports are made to RDCSG, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and the Research Development and Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC). As appropriate, reports are also made to aligned committees and groups such as the Equality and Diversity Committee and the Staff Committee.

B.2. Strategic Objectives

10. During Strathclyde's first signatory year, a comprehensive Gap Analysis against the Researcher Development Concordat obligations was undertaken consulting Researchers, their Managers, Faculties and Professional Services. This demonstrated that provision to support the development and employment of Researchers at the University was well established, and in line with the requirements of the original 2008 Concordat. Additional opportunities for new and enhanced activities were identified within areas of expanded scope and strengthened expectations of the revised Concordat.
11. Five **Key Themes** with aligned *Strategic Objectives* were identified:
 - I) Implementation and Governance:** *Embed the Concordat implementation and progress across the Institution through effective governance, communication, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.*
 - II) Research Culture:** *Champion and embed a positive Research Culture across the Institution through bold, innovative, ambitious and collaborative approaches.*
 - III) Researcher Career Development and Progression:** *Embed time and recognition for Professional and Career Development activities as integral to the Strathclyde Researcher experience to support Researcher progression into successful, fulfilling careers across a range of employment sectors.*
 - IV) Managers of Researchers Training and Development:** *Support Managers of Researchers to be excellent, effective Leaders and Managers.*
 - V) Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making:** *Effectively engage Researchers and their Managers with Policy and Decision-Making to develop a thriving and inclusive research environment.*

B.3 Implementation Plan

12. To address the strategic objectives and deliver implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat at Strathclyde, a multi-year institutional Action Plan was developed and approved through senior University committees in Spring 2021. The plan also aligns with Strathclyde's broader Strategic Plans and institutional commitments to related national frameworks and initiatives.
13. A Business Case is under consideration to allow full delivery of the Action Plan.

B.4. Measures of Success

14. Success will be measured and monitored in terms of timely achievement of the Action Plan. For each Strategic Objective, this is captured through:
- Formation of appropriate working groups and confirmation of Concordat and Researcher representation within aligned committees and initiatives, as well as, where appropriate, identification of follow-up actions; and
 - Evidence of progress/improvement regarding views and perceptions of staff, collected through the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), when compared with previous years; and implementation of new provision and supporting resources, including structures to maintain and update new online resources, as well as mechanisms to regularly monitor and report on continuing activities through the RDCSG, RDCSC and RKEC.

B.5. Implementation Plan Progress

15. Following approval of the Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan focus moved to delivering the action plan as far as possible within current resourcing. Considerable progress has been made over the past year through development of the committee structures supporting the implementation plan, tuned data collection and reporting mechanisms, and new training and development provision, as well as enhanced support as related to both the implementation of Dignity & Respect policies and objectives, and as aligned with the use and management of fixed-term contracts. Key highlights are summarised in paragraphs 16 to 29 below.
16. Strathclyde successfully retained its 10-year EU HR Excellence in Research award in March 2022 recognising our commitment to and progress towards the successful implementation of the revised Researcher Development Concordat.

B.5.1 Governance and Representation

17. As part of the realignment of the RKEC Sub-Committees, the Researcher Development Sub-Committee was reconstituted to become the Research Development and Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC) with an expanded remit to encompass reporting and monitoring of Research Culture matters relating both to those addressed by the Researcher Development Concordat and emergent sector priorities.
18. The remit of Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG) was updated to reflect the move from consultation to implementation phases, with new members being invited in alignment with the Researcher Development Concordat priorities and to ensure continued alignment with wider institutional initiatives. RDCSG reports to RDCSC which, in turn, reports to RKEC.
19. The *Research Culture and Development and Recognition* Working Groups were launched in Autumn 2021 bringing together Faculty representation and expertise from across the institution to identify and deliver operational activity.
20. Representation within all Researcher Development Concordat Groups is monitored to ensure it is comprehensive and complete. The Researchers' Group, which provides institutional representation for Researchers, is a key stakeholder group and also provides representation on all Institutional-level and Faculty Research-related committees. The Group has undertaken a review of its mechanisms for selecting representatives to support a broader range of Researchers to engage in policy and decision-making.

B.5.2 Views and Perceptions of Staff

21. A new institutional survey ("CEDARS *Lite*") was developed and launched in Spring 2022 to complement the national, biennial Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) which last ran in 2021. CEDARS *Lite* will run in the non-CEDARS years providing enhanced monitoring of Strathclyde's success measures. Strathclyde's annual Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey (PRES) has also been aligned to CEDARS *Lite* to allow comparison of Research Culture experiences across the full research lifecycle.

22. Both CEDARS and CEDARS *Lite* are designed to monitor implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat through collection of the experiences of Researchers and their Managers. Since Strathclyde became a signatory to the Researcher Development Concordat, response rates to these surveys have increased from 16% in 2020 to 31% in 2022. The survey responses have also demonstrated that overall awareness of this Concordat amongst Strathclyde staff has risen, with 71% of research and academic staff members now being aware of the Concordat.
23. Faculty networks and similar structures to support and engage Researchers on more discipline-specific topics are being developed by Faculties, including through regular forums and other formats. For example, the Faculty for Humanities & Social Sciences (HaSS) has initiated a Research & KE Staff Group and the Strathclyde Business School (SBS) has established an Early-Career Researcher Forum.

B.5.3 Training and Development

24. Strathclyde's professional development provision for Researchers and their Managers has been enhanced and expanded with additional career development workshops and research leadership programmes, as well as the introduction of new staff peer networks (for both Researchers and their Managers) and the launch of Strathclyde's Fellowship Academy, both key commitments within the Action Plan.
25. Online Equality and Diversity courses for Managers will form a core requirement of Strathclyde's mandatory Doctoral Supervisor Training programme from Autumn 2022.
26. A new 'Researcher Development Time' Policy, with associated guidance, is being developed for consideration in late 2022 to embed the Concordat's requirement that all Researchers are supported to undertake at least 10 days' professional development per year.

B.5.4 Dignity and Respect

27. HR has reviewed the University's Dignity & Respect Policy and the institutional Dignity & Respect Advisor Network will be expanded in 2022/2023, strongly aligning with the Research Culture Strategic Objective.

B.5.5 Gender-Based Violence

28. Strathclyde was one of only two Universities in Scotland to participate in the [Emily Test Charter](#) pilot designed to improve gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, intervention and support, and has now signed up to undertake the full Charter in the coming academic year. A [Gender-Based Violence Policy](#) relating to both staff and students has been published and a First Responders Network to support those disclosing incidents of GBV will be launched in 22/23.

B.5.6 Strathclyde Pledge

29. The Researcher Development Concordat is represented on the Strathclyde Pledge Steering and Working Groups, which aim to achieve a year-on-year reduction of our fixed term staff who have more than three years' service, many of whom are Researchers. Around 100 people, with service beyond three years, have been moved from fixed-term to open-ended contracts – a reduction of 30% of staff in this category over the last year.

B.6 Sector Leadership

30. The University of Strathclyde provides sector leadership in the implementation of Researcher Development Concordat with the Institutional Concordat Champion chairing the *Universities Scotland Researcher Development and Training Committee*. The Institutional Concordat Champion and the Concordat Officer deliver at national and international conferences on aspects of this Concordat.

B.7 Summary and Implementation Plan for the Coming Year

31. Considerable progress has been made in the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat at Strathclyde in 2021 and 2022 through the development of robust structures to engage with stakeholders, monitor progress, connect with aligned institutional initiatives and drive forward key actions. Over the next year, focus will be placed on continuing the implementation of the Action Plan, through close engagement with stakeholders, the working groups and national networks to identify and deliver priorities building on currently developed activities and structures.