



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Third Annual Report 2022-23

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Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: Third 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 (HR EIR) 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 Knowledge Exchange Concordat, the Concordat to Support Research Integrity as well as the Concordat on Open Research Data.
3. This Annual Report to University Court 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 2022 – 2023 period since the second Annual Report in December 2022 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 a range of other Concordats, Agreements and frameworks – including the [Research Integrity](#) and [Knowledge Exchange](#) Concordats, [Athena SWAN](#), the [Technicians Commitment](#) and the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) - 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 (SFC), the Wellcome Trust, Cancer Research UK and the Royal Academy for Engineering, are signatories and are 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 through the recent expansion of the [Research Excellence Framework \(REF\) Environment](#) to cover *People, Culture and Environment*, 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 and Governance

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) provides strategic oversight and advice on the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat. It meets twice each year and reports to the Research Development and Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC), which in turn reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). RDCSG and RDCSC are chaired by the institution's Deputy Associate Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange, currently Prof Churnjeet Mahn (previously Prof Paul McKenna and Prof Billy Kerr).
9. Two Working Groups (*Research Culture* and *Development and Recognition*) launched in Autumn 2021 provide input into the 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 Researcher Development Concordat-related 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.
10. The breadth of the Researcher Development Concordat means that a range of colleagues across the University are also responsible for initiatives which are incorporated within Strathclyde's approach to delivering the obligations of this Concordat. These include members of a broad range of professional services units such as Research & Knowledge Exchange Services, HR, Equality & Diversity and Health & Wellbeing as well as within Faculties.
11. As well as regular progress reports made to RDCSG and RDCSC, as appropriate, reports are also made to aligned committees and groups such as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Staff Committee.

B.2. Implementation Plan

12. During Strathclyde's first signatory year (2020/2021), 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.
13. Five **Key Themes** with aligned *Strategic Objectives* were identified (see B.3). To address these 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.
14. A multi-phased Business Case was developed to fully implement the Concordat Action Plan. Phase one focused on resourcing to support actions targeting Researchers themselves and it was approved in early 2023 leading to recruitment of a *Career Development Advisor for Research Staff*. Phase two will address resourcing requirements relating to actions targeting Managers of Researchers.

B.2.1 HR Excellence in Research Award Review

15. Strathclyde's HR Excellence in Research Award 12-year review is due in early 2024 and this has been used as an opportunity during 2023 to undertake a light-touch review of the 2021 Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan. This has been done in consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the Action Plan continues to address the Strategic Objectives and incorporates alignment to relevant commitments and initiatives that have taken place since Spring 2021. Consultations with Researchers, Managers of Researchers, Faculties and relevant Professional Services units took place during Summer 2023 to inform revisions. Where actions are now business as usual, they have been removed and, where actions have progressed significantly, they have been amended to remain relevant. New actions relating to aligned initiatives which have been implemented since approval of the 2021 Plan have also been included.
16. The updated Researcher Development Concordat and HR Excellence in Research Action Plans are a continuation of the 2021 Action Plan and have been approved by RDCSG, RDCSC and RKEC, as appropriate.

B.3. Strategic Objectives

17. Strathclyde's approach to implementing the Researcher Development Concordat has five **Key Themes** with aligned *Strategic Objectives*:

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.4. Measures of Success

18. Success continues to be measured and monitored in terms of timely achievement of the Action Plan. For each Strategic Objective, this is captured through:
 - a. operation of appropriate working groups and continued Concordat and Researcher representation within aligned committees and initiatives, as well as, where appropriate, identification of follow-up actions;
 - b. 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; and
 - c. evidence of progress/improvement regarding views and perceptions of staff, collected through the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) and other measures.

B.5. Implementation Progress during the 2022/2023 Academic Year

19. Considerable progress has been made during the second year of the implementation phase through both:
 - a. continuation and enhancement of activities implemented in the previous year, such as developing Research Culture indicators within the RDCSC (which had been re-constituted in 2022/2023), approval of policies, enhanced support processes and development opportunities;

- b. new initiatives to address actions, such as the inaugural Research Integrity & Culture Week, research funding opportunities and recruitment of a new role.

20. Key highlights are summarised in paragraphs 21 to 36 below.

B.5.1 Governance and Representation

21. Representation within all Researcher Development Concordat Groups is monitored to ensure it is comprehensive and complete. To guarantee continued alignment with broader university priorities, membership of the RDCSG and RDCSC was expanded during 2022/2023 to include representation of emerging relevant initiatives, such as Health & Wellbeing.
22. Indicators to provide a deeper understanding of Strathclyde's Research Culture landscape are being developed and piloted within the RDCSC reporting processes. These include indicators relating to staff experiences of research culture (via CEDARS); prevalence and themes of Research Culture misconduct; staff engagement with Research Culture training; and examining funding award and doctoral supervision data by protected characteristics.
23. The Researchers' Group, which provides institutional representation for Researchers, is a key stakeholder group within the Concordat governance. It also provides representation on all Institution-level and Faculty Research-related committees which has expanded to include the newly formed HR Policy Review Forum and will provide Researcher representation on the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee from 2023/2024.
24. Training for Researchers' Group representatives was implemented this year to support individuals as it was recognised that most will be undertaking these types of roles for the first time.
25. Collection of the broader experiences of Researchers and their Managers, through the national, biennial Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) and Strathclyde's CEDARS *Lite* (implemented in 2021/2022) in intervening years, is now embedded in annual monitoring and reporting processes. Annual reports are provided to the RDCSG and RDCSC, with focused reports provided to wider committees as appropriate. Both surveys are designed to monitor implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat.

B.5.2 Research Integrity and Culture Week

26. Strathclyde hosted its inaugural Research Integrity and Culture Week in January 2023 to promote research integrity and a positive research culture across the institution. The week comprised a series of events as well as online activities and a sector-wide '*Where next for research integrity & culture?*' symposium. The symposium included presentations from the UK Research Integrity Office, the UK Committee on Research Integrity, the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and the Ethics Governance in Scottish Universities project and was followed by an out-of-cycle Universities Scotland RKEC (US RKEC) roundtable.
27. The events were very positively received and significantly increased staff engagement with these topics compared to events in past years. More than five times as many staff attended events during the week than had engaged with similar individual events relating to research integrity in the previous year.
28. The US RKEC roundtable led to the formation of a US Research Culture Task and Finish Group to consider collaborative approaches to addressing Research Culture across Scottish Higher Education Institutions.

B.5.3 Dignity and Respect

29. HR revised the University's Dignity & Respect Policy and re-launched the institutional Dignity & Respect Advisor Network during 2022/2023 with 14 new advisors from across Faculties and Professional Services. Advisors have received extensive training and are available to provide support to staff members in relation to matters of any inappropriate behaviour. In addition, a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) First Responders

Network was also launched as part of the Safe 360 framework and includes trained volunteers who can support and liaison with anyone who has been subjected to harm, abuse, sexual assault or sexual harassment. Both initiatives align closely with the Research Culture aims of the Researcher Development Concordat.

B.5.4 Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture Call

30. Strathclyde has been awarded approx. £1M from the Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture call for the institution-wide project “Cultures of Collaborative Research in a Socially Progressive Technological University”. The proposal for this competitive funding award was developed and submitted in Spring 2023 and the project will begin in March 2024. The call was open to forty-two institutions and aimed to enable organisations to move beyond their current practice and explore ways to advance their research cultures.

B.5.5 Researcher Development Time Policy

31. Strathclyde’s Researcher Development Time Policy was approved, this addresses the Concordat obligation that Researchers are provided with ten days professional development time (pro rata per year) plus time to develop their research identity and leadership skills. The policy will be implemented at the start of the 2023/2024 academic year, accompanied by guidance for Researchers and their Managers to support them to effectively apply this policy.

B.5.6 Professional Career Development Advice

32. To address the obligation that Researchers have access to professional career development advice, a Career Development Advisor for Research Staff was recruited and joined Strathclyde during summer 2023. They will provide support for individual Researchers as well as continuing to enhance career development provision across the institution and delivering broader activities within the Action Plan.

B.5.7 Development and Training

33. Development and training opportunities are a key mechanism for implementing the aims of the Researcher Development Concordat. A suite of professional development provision for Researchers and their Managers has been delivered including career development workshops and research leadership programmes, as well as the continuation and enhancement of staff peer networks (for both Researchers and their Managers) which had been launched as part of the action plan in 2021/2022.

34. Online Equality and Diversity courses for Managers were made a core requirement of Strathclyde’s mandatory Doctoral Supervisor Training programme during 2022/2023, supporting Managers of Researchers to embed appropriate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practices in their people management and supervisory roles.

35. Strathclyde’s Fellowship Academy was launched to pilot focussed and tailored support to develop the profiles of early-career staff to enhance their competitiveness in Fellowship award processes. 15 individuals were selected and supported from across the four Faculties during 2022/2023, the second and third cohorts will be selected for the 2023/2024 academic year.

B.5.8 Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)

36. Recognising that responsible research assessment practices – those that reward the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research – are required to support a diverse and positive research culture, Strathclyde signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment in November 2022 as one of the first UK Universities. By signing, and joining the associated Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment, Strathclyde has committed to reviewing and revising its practices to align with the principles of responsible research assessment. Development of a CoARA action plan is underway.

B.5.9 Support for Wider Research-Related Concordat Framework

37. Strathclyde seeks to align activities on research-related concordats, which entails close collaboration between colleagues in Professional Services Directorates. A key example of this is collaboration between the Research Policy and Information Team (with responsibility for the Research Integrity Concordat) and

OSDU (with responsibility for the Researcher Development Concordat). Research integrity is seen as an integral part of promoting a positive research culture and the Researcher Development Concordat, which has received internal investment to support its activities, has proven to be an effective vehicle for progressing and monitoring research integrity activities.

B.6 Sector Leadership

38. The University of Strathclyde provides sector leadership in the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat. The Institutional Concordat Champion chaired the *Universities Scotland Researcher Development and Training Committee* from April 2021 to April 2023 and is now co-leading the US Research Culture Task and Finish Group to consider collaborative approaches to addressing Research Culture across Scottish HEIs. Further, the Head of Research Policy & Information is a member of the Vitae Policy Advisory Group, a sector group focused on providing strategic advice in relation to the value and potential of Researchers to policymakers. The Institutional Concordat Champion and the Concordat Officer also deliver at national and international conferences on aspects of this Concordat.

B.7 Summary and Implementation Plan for the Coming Year

39. Considerable progress has been made in the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat at Strathclyde during the 2022/2023 academic year. Advancements have built upon the development of robust structures to engage with stakeholders, monitor progress, connect with aligned institutional initiatives and drive forward key actions developed in the previous year, while also implementing new initiatives to deliver Concordat obligations, as described in the action plan.

40. A phased approach has been taken to implementing the obligations of this Concordat. Over the next year the focus will be placed on actions relating to career development advice for Researchers while also moving forward with activities to support Managers of Researchers and to address sector-wide Research Culture challenges.

41. Activity will continue to take place through close engagement with stakeholders, the working groups and national networks while building on currently developed activities and structures.