

University of Strathclyde
Researcher Development Concordat
First Annual Report
2020-21

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

A Introduction

1. The University of Strathclyde became a signatory to the revised [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) (“the Researcher Development Concordat”) in June 2020. This agreement builds on the original Researcher Development Concordat published in 2008, to now provide strengthened expectations and distinct obligations on Institutional support for *Researchers*¹ and their *Managers*. Strathclyde is committed to supporting the professional and career development of our researchers and has retained the EU HR Excellence in Research Award since 2011 which recognises this commitment.
2. The aims of this Researcher Development Concordat strongly align with Strathclyde’s strategic ambitions addressed within Vision 2025 and our People Strategy as well as our institutional commitments to the *Research Integrity* and *Knowledge Exchange* Concordats.
3. As a signatory institution to this revised Concordat we are obliged to report annually to Court describing our Strategic Objectives and Measures of Success along with an Implementation Plan and Progress Update, subsequently making this report publicly available. An interim report was presented to Court in June 2021 to meet this obligation within one of year of becoming a signatory; reporting at the time was made with the intention that the reporting cycle move to November, and annually thereafter, to align with that of the *Research Integrity Concordat*. Therefore, this report serves as the First Annual Report on progress of the implementation of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers at Strathclyde.

B National Context

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. The Principles of this Concordat - *Environment and Culture*; *Employment*; and *Professional and Career Development* – reflect the current sector-wide priorities of People and Culture addressed in the recently published *BEIS Research & Development People & Culture Strategy* and *Innovation Strategy* as well as the SFC’s *Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability*.
5. There is substantial sector support for the Researcher Development Concordat with more than 80 Universities so far becoming signatories in addition to major funding organisations, including UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Scottish Funding Council, Wellcome, Cancer Research UK and the Royal Academy for Engineering. UKRI and the Royal Academy for Engineering have notably also published their own Funder Action Plans committing to embedding the Concordat Principles within their funding award and review processes.

C Leadership

6. In line with our signatory responsibilities, Professor Tim Bedford (Associate Principal Research and Innovation) has been named as Strathclyde’s Senior Academic Concordat Champion with Dr Emma Compton-Daw as the Institutional Concordat Champion. Dr Maria Weikum has been appointed as the Researcher Development Concordat Officer.
7. The Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG), chaired by Professor Billy Kerr (Deputy Associate Principal Research and Knowledge Exchange), was convened in October 2020 to oversee and advise on Gap Analysis and Action Plan development with representation from all Faculties,

¹ Researchers are defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed specifically for this purpose; appreciable numbers of research colleagues within this category are often referred to as ‘postdoctoral researchers’ or ‘postdocs’.

all Professional Services units currently supporting Researchers, and Researchers themselves. Regular progress reports are made to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and the Researcher Development Sub-Committee (RDSC).

D Researcher Representation

8. The Researcher's voice is at the heart of both the Researcher Development Concordat and Strathclyde's commitment to embedding the Principles of this Concordat. Researcher representatives are members of RDSC, RKEC, Faculty Research Committees, RDCSG and its Working Groups.

E Implementation Plan and Progress

9. Within the first year of signing, organisations are required to undertake a Gap Analysis and develop an Action Plan. During 2020/2021, a broad-ranging and comprehensive consultation process took place, overseen by RDCSG, to address this obligation. The views of Researchers, their Managers and those who support them across the University were sought through focus groups, analysis of the results of the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) 2020 and direct engagement with Faculty academic representatives. The remit of this Concordat is wide-ranging and aligns with many functions of the University; therefore, connectivity and collaboration with ongoing strategic institutional initiatives was embedded at all stages and continues.
10. The Gap Analysis demonstrated that Researcher Development is well-embedded at Strathclyde in relation to the original Researcher Development Concordat, with activities in place such as comprehensive programmes of development opportunities, a [Policy for the Use of Fixed-Term Contracts](#), the [Strathclyde Pledge](#) and the [Researchers' Group](#), a Researcher-led group that organises activities and represents the interests of Researchers across the university. Opportunities for additional activity were identified in particular in areas where the Concordat's expectations have been strengthened as well as around emerging sector-wide challenges.
11. As a result of the Gap Analysis, five key Action Themes, each with a Strategic Objective, were identified to address the considerably enhanced and additional obligations of this revised Concordat. This plan has been approved by RKEC, Senate, Staff Committee and the Executive Team. The Action Plan is summarised below under its five Key Themes and the full action plan with detailed success measures and aligned Institutional initiatives is available upon request.

Key Action Plan Themes

12. Implementation and Governance

Strategic Objective: Embed the Concordat implementation and progress across the Institution through effective governance, communication, monitoring and reporting mechanisms

Robust implementation and governance measures will be critical to successfully addressing the obligations of this revised Concordat. Effective monitoring and review mechanisms are in place relating to the original Concordat which can be built upon to deliver this expanded revised Concordat.

Actions have been developed relating to review of governance processes and, where necessary, enhancements made in order to monitor, review and communicate implementation and progress. A Communications Strategy will be developed supported by a single online destination for all aspects of Researcher Development and Research Culture. Approaches to recognising the roles of staff across the Institution in delivering the Concordat actions will be considered to ensure effective implementation.

13. Research Culture

Strategic Objective: Champion and embed a positive Research Culture across the Institution through bold, innovative, ambitious and collaborative approaches

Research Culture is a sector-wide priority encompassing the behaviours, values, expectations, incentives, attitudes and norms of the research community. In this context, Research Culture includes equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), bullying and harassment, research integrity, and health and wellbeing. Actions have been developed to embed collaboration with related Institutional initiatives and groups to identify bold, innovative and ambitious approaches to encourage a positive Research Culture,

as an essential aspect to achieving our Concordat obligations and addressing wider national strategies. Meaningful engagement with Research Culture training will be embedded across the university while enhancing awareness of support mechanisms for staff and our institutional understanding of the challenges through reporting and monitoring. Health and Wellbeing has been a significant, and nationally recognised, area of focus for Strathclyde and it is intended that this will continue.

14. *Researcher Career Development and Progression*

Strategic Objective: 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

Professional and Career Development are integral to enabling Researchers to achieve their full potential in an increasingly diverse global research environment and employment market. There is a wide range of available professional and career development opportunities at Strathclyde including dedicated induction support.

This revised Concordat strengthens expectations on Institutions in terms of the level of support provided, which Strathclyde will meet through actions which will embed an expectation of at least 10 days development time for Researchers per year, in addition to time for developing research identity and leadership skills, within Institutional Policy. Researchers will also be provided with access to Career Development Reviews, Professional Careers advice and enhanced training and development opportunities.

Job security for researchers is recognised as a sector-wide challenge which Strathclyde seeks to address through our [Strathclyde Pledge](#) commitment to stable contracts with fair and equal pay, while continuing to review and support job security and progression mechanisms for Researchers. Guidance for Researchers and their Managers in this domain will also be enhanced.

15. *Managers of Researchers Training and Development*

Strategic Objective: Support Managers of Researchers to be excellent, effective Leaders and Managers

The revised Researcher Development Concordat includes Managers of Researchers as a key stakeholder group for the first time, recognising their distinct development needs relating to line management, project management, supporting Researcher career development and creating an effective and positive research culture.

Actions have been developed to identify and implement mechanisms to establish and deliver enhanced training for Managers of Researchers alongside dedicated induction support and extended peer-learning and networking activities.

16. *Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making*

Strategic Objective: Effectively engage Researchers and their Managers with Policy and Decision-Making to develop a thriving and inclusive research environment

Engaging Researchers and their Managers in Institutional Policy and Decision-Making is key to ensuring effective outcomes are embraced by all stakeholders.

Actions have been developed to identify mechanisms for working collaboratively with Faculties, Departments and Schools to provide enhanced opportunities for Researchers and their Managers to engage with Institutional Policy and Decision-Making.

Measures of Success

17. Our success will be measured and monitored in terms of timely achievement of the proposed actions. For each strategic objective, this will be 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, RDSC and RKEC.

Implementation Plan Progress

18. Where possible, the planning and implementation of actions under each of the Action Packages is underway as summarised below (Paragraphs 19 to 23). A Business Case is currently in development to address resourcing of the Action Plan. Further actions will be addressed in the coming year and beyond.

Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group

19. The remit of the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG) has been revised to reflect progression from the consultation to the implementation phase in order to oversee and advise on the implementation of the Concordat Principles and Action Plan. Two Working Groups have been formed under the remit of RDCSG to address actions relating to:

- A) Research Culture (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Bullying and Harassment; Research Integrity; and Mental Health and Wellbeing); and
- B) Development and Recognition (Professional and Career Development for Researchers; Training and Development for Managers of Researchers; Recognition of the full range of activities within Researcher and Manager roles).

20. The Working Groups are comprised of relevant Steering Group members plus additional staff with responsibility in the areas addressed and Faculty Representatives. Mechanisms have also been established to ensure ongoing, close working relationships with Faculties in addressing the obligations of Researchers and Managers of Researchers.

Collaboration with Ongoing Institutional Initiatives

21. The Researcher Development Concordat has a wide-ranging remit and therefore interacts with a number of ongoing institutional initiatives. Consideration has been given, and will be ongoing, to work collaboratively, either through inclusion of relevant colleagues on RDCSG and its working groups or through reporting directly to those initiatives. Since the approval of the Action Plan, relevant aspects have been presented at the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee and to the Strathclyde Safe360 Group (formerly the Inquiry Recommendations Implementation Group (IRIG)).

CEDARS 2021

22. The second CEDARS survey ran at Strathclyde from 22nd April to 30th June 2021 and the results will be reported to relevant committees from September 2021. The findings and outcomes will continue to be used to inform the Researcher Development Concordat actions and will be shared with appropriate groups.

Enhanced Development Opportunities

23. Three peer-learning networks will be launched in September 2021 focusing on the following topics:

- Career Management (for Researchers);
- Managing and Supervising Researchers (for Academic Staff); and
- Research Funding (for Research, Academic and KE staff)

While the networks are targeted at specific staff groups, they will be open to all interested members of staff. During the year further opportunities will be developed.

Summary and Activities for the Coming Year

A comprehensive strategy to embed the Principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers has been developed through a deep and broad-ranging Gap Analysis consultation during 2020 and early 2021. A detailed Action Plan has been approved through the University's committee structures and progress is being made according to this plan. Over the next year, we will continue to embed the Principles of this Researcher Development Concordat within Strathclyde through continued implementation of the Action Plan and connectivity with aligned Institutional Initiatives