

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Universities and Research Institutes

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Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	14 th May 2025

Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers (*max 500 words*)

As outlined in our institutional “Code of Practice for the Career Management of Research-Only Staff”, our Research-Only Staff are regarded as full members of academic staff and are afforded the same consideration as all other comparable employees in relation to the day-to-day life of their Faculty and Department. Researchers are formally represented on Faculty and University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committees (RKEC), and on University Academic Board. In addition, Researcher Representatives from each Faculty are valued members of the Concordat Working Group, to ensure that our Researchers’ collective voice is heard and that their opinions and feedback are incorporated into University policy and action plans.

Researchers undertake Personal Development Review (PDR), an annual appraisal in which the Researcher identifies and agrees work objectives and training needs for the coming year with their line manager and discusses longer-term career aspirations.

Research-Only Staff have access to internal training, including a mandatory programme of University Research & Knowledge Exchange events (covering Induction; Ethics; Data Management; Research Integrity, Applying for and Managing External Research Grants) as well as an array of additional training, e.g. Commercialisation; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI); Intellectual Property; Impact; Leadership; Public Engagement, etc.

Research-Only Staff have access to careers-specific training (e.g. applying for jobs; preparing for interview) and one to one advice of the Careers Centre, to discuss career options both within and beyond academia.

The University additionally hosts a biennial Researcher Career Pathways Event, which puts a spotlight on the personal career journeys of researchers who have gone on to have a range of diverse and interesting careers post-PhD, within academia and beyond.

Research-Only Staff can also access the University Research Staff Mentoring Scheme to support career development conversations with a more experienced academic from outside of their immediate Department. This can include working towards applications for promotion.

The University is committed to providing good working conditions, training and career development opportunities for all. It has held the HR Excellence in Research Award since 2012 and became an official signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in May 2020. The University is committed to advancing gender equality, representation and progression for all staff, across all disciplines and roles. OBU has engaged with the Athena Swan Charter since 2009, achieving a first institutional Bronze award in 2013. OBU achieved a Stonewall Gold Award 2023 as LGBTQ+ Inclusive Employer. The University has formally signed up to the Race Equality Charter and is working towards its first award, with Researcher representation on its Steering Group.

The University is committed to establishing suitable roles for staff who are on fixed-term contracts that are coming to an end, wherever possible, through its redeployment scheme, which attempts to match staff to vacancies arising, before these roles are sent to external advert.

Wherever possible, excellent contract researchers are recruited to permanent positions at OBU. During 23/24, eight Research-Only Staff were recruited into permanent research or academic roles (2 Research Fellows, 2 Lecturers, 4 Senior Lecturers).

(493 words)

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success *(max 600 words)*

Environment and culture:

Employing the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) for benchmarking new initiatives and evaluating progress

As planned, we engaged in CEDARS 2023 and are on target to participate next in CEDARS 2025, and biennially thereafter. CEDARS 2023 forms our baseline position, in order to plan developments going forward. We are looking to build on our CEDARS 2023 overall response rate of 50%, including increased engagement from our Research-Only Staff (response rate 32% in CEDARS 2023).

As per CEDARS 2023, an action plan will follow evaluation of CEDARS 2025 data.

Establishment of a Research-only Staff Network

In response to researcher feedback in focus groups, we established a Research-only Staff Network to facilitate peer group discussion, learning and support. A programme of themed monthly events is offered to all Research-Only Staff, which has been extended to our Research students from 23/24. Network activities are evaluated annually at year-end to ensure that the direction of the network meets the needs of our researchers going forward.

Employment:

Improving annual appraisal and career-focussed and professional development discussions for researchers

Since becoming a signatory to the revised Concordat, a key focus has been to improve the uptake and usefulness of annual appraisal (Performance and Development Review - PDR). In particular, we wish to promote PDR as a framework for supporting career-focussed discussions between researcher and their manager, planning 10 days training and professional development (pro rata, per annum), and discussing and agreeing strategies through which the researcher can develop an independent research identity, in line with key Concordat obligations. Our on demand training bundles for Managers of Researchers and Research-Only Staff both have a strong emphasis on guidance for effective PDR.

We will continue to monitor uptake and perceived usefulness of PDR by researchers, with a view to developing further actions if necessary. Specific success measures include an increase in researchers reporting that they had undertaken staff appraisal from 60% (CROS 2019) to 87% in CEDARS 2023, and 77% of researchers reporting staff review/appraisal was 'useful/very useful' in CEDARS

2023. We are looking to maintain or improve on these figures in CEDARS 2025 and beyond.

Professional Development of Researchers:

New training bundles for 1) Managers of Researchers and 2) Research-Only Staff

A key element of our strategy is the development of a new training bundle issued to all Managers of Researchers, from April 22 onwards, and the development of a new training bundle issued to all Research-Only Staff, from March 23 onwards. Bundles highlight key university and external frameworks and policies; signpost to key resources and training, and provide top tips and advice. Success measures include: improvement, by 5-10%, in the proportion of researchers reporting having knowledge and understanding of e.g. the Concordat, HR Excellence, etc. in CEDARS 2023 and 2025, in comparison to our CROS 2019 scores, in addition to success measures related to PDR stated previously.

Further development and evaluation of University Research & KE Training as part of our umbrella programme (EXPLORE@Brookes) and expansion of researcher support

Evaluation (including ratings of usefulness and the extent to which the session meets its purpose) is requested after each individual event in the University Research & KE Training programme and is particularly helpful when introducing a brand new event, to shape it going forward.

Please see [Concordat Institutional Action Plan](#) (Feb 2021) and [HR Excellence in Research Award 2022-2025 Action Plan](#) for further details.

The Concordat Working Group wishes to acknowledge that 24/25 was a challenging year. The University underwent Strategic Transformation, resulting in faculty and department restructure and a freeze on recruitment, promotions and funding for external staff development.

(600 words)

Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/PIs); Researchers]

<p>Environment and Culture (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution:</p> <p>Research-Only Staff Induction training bundle – An evaluation of the new Research-Only Staff training bundle was carried out Jul-Sep 2024. The response rate was low (12%).</p> <p>Managers of Researchers:</p> <p>Managers of Researchers Training bundle – The following suggestions for improvements to the structure and content of the bundle, provided by Managers at evaluation, were implemented during the last year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added a new “Essentials checklist for Managers” – both as a tick box list and as a flow chart, with links, to address different preferences, as a reminder of the responsibilities of Managers at different stages of the Researcher’s contract timeline. • Added the Managers training bundle contents list in “Suggested viewing order” – both as a tick box list and as a flow chart, with links, to address different preferences. <p>Researchers:</p> <p>Research-Only Staff Induction training bundle – Whilst the response rate was low, feedback received was positive. Researchers rated the extent to which the Induction Training Bundle meets its purpose (to provide an overview of the Concordat and signpost to relevant policy, resources, training and development) as 4.3 out of 5, on a scale where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “completely”. Researchers rated the usefulness of content, in relation to their Concordat responsibilities as a Researcher, as 4.1 out of 5, on a scale where 1 is “not at all useful” and 5 is “very useful”.</p> <p>The most useful themes cited from the bundle include: 1) career development, planning and ownership and 2) networking and the value of making connections.</p>
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	<p>Sample positive feedback:</p> <p>“The one thing I come across again and again in my job is not knowing who to go to for certain information or where to find things out, so having a whole bunch of slide sets in one place that signpost officers and information is a helpful resource.”</p> <p>“incredibly useful and beneficial for researchers, whether they are experienced or newer researchers.”</p> <p>Suggestions from Researchers for improvements to the bundle will be taken forward over the next year.</p> <p>Research-Only Staff Network – Network activities were evaluated at end of 23/24 (Jun-Jul 2024). A response rate of 26% is still lower than hoped, but more than double the 11% response rate at last year’s evaluation.</p> <p>Researchers rated the average usefulness of Network meetings overall as 4.4 out of 5, on a scale where 1 is “Not at all useful” and 5 is “Very useful”. The most commonly cited benefits of Network meetings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A chance to ask questions (70%) • A chance to discuss important issues (65%) • Meeting Researchers from across the University in different disciplines (65%) • Opportunity to Network (61%) <p>Sample highlights from feedback:</p> <p>“As a new employee it helped me a lot in learning how research should be conducted.”</p> <p>“I liked its friendliness and inclusivity.”</p>
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	<p>“The topics are useful and interesting, and the way the sessions themselves are structured/designed, supports my development and effectiveness as a researcher.”</p> <p>Meeting themes for 24/25 were again chosen by our Researchers, for our Researchers, covering: Artificial Intelligence; career planning; Imposter Syndrome; external research grants for Research-Only Staff; interdisciplinary working; Knowledge Exchange; CEDARS; public engagement and impact; and Research Excellence Framework (REF 2029).</p> <p>LinkedIn community – We established a new Research-Only Staff Network LinkedIn group in August 2024, to connect Research-Only Staff of Oxford Brookes University, past and present, for professional networking and future collaboration. There are 30 people in the group as at January 2025.</p> <p>This is an opportunity to stay connected with our Research-Only Staff alumni, after their research-only contracts end, to learn about their career journeys within and beyond academia. We hope to ask our Researcher alumni to participate in future Career Pathways Events.</p> <p><i>(600 words)</i></p>
Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)	<p>Institution:</p> <p>Review of Fixed-Term Contracts – The Strategic People Partners (People Directorate) continue to provide ongoing review of Research-Only Staff on Fixed-Term Contracts with the relevant line managers, with a view to moving any to permanent contracts where there is sufficient certainty about future funding. Eight Research-Only Staff moved to permanent contracts in 23/24, which is a record high for the University.</p> <p>Managers of Researchers:</p> <p>CEDARS 2023 action - Experience of Performance & Development Review (PDR)</p>

	<p>The Learning and Development team launched a new Leadership and Management Framework, with a brief overview video.</p> <p>“Leadership and Management” resources and training have been brought together in a new dashboard on the Staff Learning Portal, aimed at new managers, with further work planned to support middle managers. Materials of note to support the PDR process include “Enabling results” and “Fostering Potential”.</p> <p>Managers of Researchers were encouraged to complete a short survey (Dec 2024), to provide a snapshot of current perceptions around PDR expectations, confidence and access to resources and training.</p> <p>CEDARS 2023 action - Maintaining formal records of continuing professional development</p> <p>A new training video was added to the Managers of Researchers training bundle, to highlight the functionality of the Staff Learning Portal as a one-stop shop for logging all professional development activities (internal and external) in one place, for exporting to, for example, annual PDR and CV updates.</p> <p>CEDARS 2023 action - Reporting bullying and harassment</p> <p>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team introduced a new mandatory induction module for all new staff, reinforcing the message about responsibilities and expected behaviours.</p> <p>A consultant conducted a review of the network of volunteer harassment advisors and made recommendations on how the network can be reinforced, to ensure that staff experiencing harassment are adequately supported.</p> <p>The 2024 staff survey included a set of questions around harassment, to inform future work.</p> <p>A new post, Anti-Harassment and EDI Advisor, was appointed in August 2024.</p>
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CEDARS 2023 action - A narrative CV approach to internal promotions

A one-minute video on the “narrative CV” was added to the Manager training bundle.

In October 2024, Managers of Researchers were encouraged to participate in the academic promotion process focus groups, by targeted communication. External consultancy company (SUMS) will gather feedback on our current process, to inform the People Directorate review, before the promotions process is relaunched, when finances allow. SUMS will review processes to ensure they are fair, transparent and inclusive.

Researchers:

CEDARS 2023 action – Family Leave

The Policy Manager (People Directorate) carried out a holistic review of family friendly policies, under the University’s People and Culture Strategy. This includes legislative updates, sector benchmarking and best practice. Review is ongoing.

Updated policies, Mar/Apr 2024:

- Adoption and Surrogacy
- Dependant Care Leave, Domestic Emergency and Bereavement Leave
- Maternity
- Paternity, Co-Parent and Partner Leave
- Shared Parental Leave

The Family Policies and Work-Life Balance (WLB) web pages have both been updated for improved clarity and easier navigation.

The WLB web page signposts to the revised Flexible Working Policy (updated August 2024) and guidance for managers and employees.

	<p>CEDARS 2023 action - Redundancy entitlements</p> <p>The Redundancy Policy was reviewed and revised in May 2024. This policy includes a clear section on fixed-term contracts ending early, as a result of redundancy and a further link to Fixed-Term Contracts ending at the contracted time.</p> <p>CEDARS 2023 action - A narrative CV approach to internal promotions</p> <p>A one-minute video on the “narrative CV” was added to the Research-Only Staff induction bundle.</p> <p>In October 2024, Research-Only Staff were encouraged to participate in academic promotions process focus groups, by targeted communication, with SUMS (see above), to inform the People Directorate’s review of promotions.</p> <p><i>(600 words)</i></p>
Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)	<p>Institution:</p> <p>University Research & KE Training – During 23/24, 7 new training events were offered to research-active staff of all levels, including Researchers and their Managers, covering: Knowledge Exchange; Consultancy, CPD and Contract Research; EDI Best Practice; Social Media; Applying a Gender Dimension; Knowledge Transfer Partnerships; and Open Research.</p> <p>Feedback was evaluated in summer 2024. New sessions were well received. Looking only at the 7 new sessions, delegates gave an average rating for sessions meeting their purpose of 4.6 out of 5, on a scale where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “completely” and average usefulness of content as 4.5 out of 5, on a scale where 1 is “not at all useful” and 5 is “extremely useful”.</p> <p>Research Leadership Coaching – An evaluation of 23/24 Coaching awards was carried out in July 2024. Feedback was received from 100% of Researchers and 100% of Managers.</p>

	<p>Managers of Researchers:</p> <p>Research Leadership Coaching - Managers gave an average rating of 9.1 out of 10 to the question “Overall, how would you rate your experience of Research Leadership Coaching?” on a scale where 1 is “Not at all positive” and 10 is “Very positive”.</p> <p>Managers listed the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised strategy for recruiting, setting boundaries, negotiating and assigning responsibilities. • Better linking of personal career goals with those of the Researcher’s. • Increased confidence to be present, aware and responsive to the team's needs. • Developing a toolkit to recognise and intervene, when team members face their own challenges. • Change of approach in PDR. • Increased positivity. • New techniques learned to put into practice with Researchers. <p>Researchers:</p> <p>Research Leadership Coaching - Researchers gave an average rating of 9.5 out of 10 to the question “Overall, how would you rate your experience of Research Leadership Coaching?” on a scale where 1 is “Not at all positive” and 10 is “Very positive”.</p> <p>100% of Researchers reported that the Coaching helped with overcoming barriers, resilience, self-efficacy and self-esteem/confidence.</p> <p>Research-Only Staff reported benefits included:</p>
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- Increased feeling of empowerment and confidence.
- The tools to self-assess career/professional development goals in new ways.
- Working through challenges to professional/career development and identifying different approaches and solutions.
- A more positive mind-set.
- Taking action to resolve, and not suppress, problems.
- Developing strategies for improved work performance.
- Helping to develop future, and longer-term, research plans and goals, including building the team.

Researcher Career Pathways Event (Jan 2024) – An internal panel, from a range of career stages, highlighted their routes into “Academia” and an external panel discussed their careers “Beyond Academia”. 123 researchers registered, including 27 Research-Only Staff (22% of registrants). Feedback was very positive, with 100% of delegates who responded to feedback recommending the event to other researchers (n=24, representing 43% of attendees).

Inspiring next steps from our Researchers included:

- Talking to the person working in your dream job
- Reflecting on current skills, abilities and interests
- Completing a paper
- Applying for grants
- Undertaking further professional development
- Networking
- Recognising that if a future in academia does not work out, it is not failing.

Cross-Institutional Speed Mentoring - Research-Only Staff were invited to participate in an online Cross-Institutional Speed Mentoring Event, in October 2024, in collaboration with: King’s College London, University of Bath, University of Cambridge, University of Oxford and University of Sussex.

Feedback was received from 11/17 Mentees = 65% response. 100% of Mentees reported that the session was worth their

	<p>time and would recommend Cross-Institutional Speed Mentoring to other potential Mentees.</p> <p>Key takeaways included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved self-belief • Pro-actively seeking out additional support/mentoring • Thinking more broadly across disciplines • Being entrepreneurial • Obtaining teaching experience • Being visible - talking to colleagues; presenting at seminars; going to conferences • Valuing uniqueness • Widening professional networks <p><i>(600 words)</i></p>
<p>Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result. <i>(max 500 words)</i></p>	
<p>Research-Only Staff Network - At the 23/24 end of year evaluation, Researchers were invited once more to lead the Network. Abhinav Priyadarshi stepped forward to become the first Chair of the Research-Only Staff Network, from 24/25. Having a member of Research-Only Staff lead the Network, engage our Researchers in monthly events and host the sessions has been a real asset and we are seeing increased participation at events so far in 24/25. We will continue to learn from Abinhav's leadership and enthusiasm! Lessons learned include the importance of the Network being Researcher-led.</p> <p>Evaluation of 23/24 Network activities indicated that the most common barriers to attending Network events were: Time – Too busy to attend (72%) and Clash with another event (61%). This mirrors last year's findings. Events will continue to be offered on varied days and times, alternating between in person and online (format chosen by our Researchers) to enable people with different working patterns to attend. Slides will continue to be circulated to all Researchers after the event, to help those who were unable to make the meeting to catch up with content at a more convenient time. The Researcher Development team is keen to avoid duplication and date clashes with other organisers of Faculty-wide or University-wide events for Researchers, and will continue to investigate how to best mitigate</p>	

this, to avoid competing for the same audience and to help more Researchers to attend.

Research Leadership Coaching – Despite financial pressures, the University’s Central Research Fund has provided continued access to external Research Leadership Coaching, for Researchers and Managers during 24/25. End of award evaluations from 23/24 of the many benefits of Coaching for both Researchers and their Managers provided useful evidence to keep this important scheme open. Evaluations will again be requested at the end of July 2025 to measure the ongoing success of the scheme.

Evaluation of Research-Only Staff Induction training bundle – Despite the evaluation being open for 3 months, regular reminders, and the opportunity to feedback in person as well as in writing, the response rate was very low (12%). We understand that our Researchers are busy and asked to provide a lot of feedback and we do not wish to over-burden them. As the response is small, we will carry out future evaluations of this kind, to continue to monitor usefulness and review content. Suggestions for improvements from the 23/24 end of year evaluation will be progressed over the next year.

CEDARS 2023 action plan – There has been a lot of progress on CEDARS 2023 actions over the last year, from different parts of the University. Whilst CEDARS actions progressed form part of this Concordat report, an important lesson is to ensure that we keep our Researchers and Managers directly informed of CEDARS achievements to date, as a reminder that their views matter and are acted upon. A progress report update on CEDARS 2023 actions was shared with Researchers and Managers of Researchers in January 2025.

(489 words)

Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period
(max 500 words)

Our forward plan for the coming year includes the following actions:

- **Research-Only Staff Induction training bundle – Improvements.** Implement suggestions for improvements from 23/24 year-end feedback and seek further feedback on usefulness and function at end of 24/25.
- **Research Leadership Coaching awards – Evaluation.** Seek feedback from Research-Only Staff and Managers of Researchers on the benefits of 24/25 coaching awards to inform the future funding of the scheme from Central Research Funds.
- **Research-Only Staff Network – Evaluation.** Obtain feedback on Network event programme in 24/25, suggestions for themed events in 25/26, ideas for improved attendance at future Network events and suggestions for the future direction of the Network.
- **CEDARS 2023 ongoing action (Research Staff) – Redundancy.** People Directorate to create staff resource to raise awareness of redundancy entitlements and process. To be signposted in Research-Only Staff and Managers of Researchers training bundles.
- **CEDARS 2023 ongoing action (Research Staff) – Promotion Pathways.** Vice Chancellor's Group to develop new promotion pathways, including those appropriate for research-focussed staff.
- **CEDARS 2023 ongoing action (Research Staff and Established & Senior Staff) – Narrative CV.** People Directorate to develop guidance and templates for internal promotions, taking into account the principles of the narrative CV.
- **CEDARS 2023 ongoing action (Established & Senior Staff) – Review of PDR.** People Directorate to review approach to Performance Management, including PDR during semester two 24/25, as part of People and Culture operational plan.
- **CEDARS 2023 ongoing action (Established & Senior Staff) – Bullying & harassment.** Equality, Diversity & Inclusion team to make short training video to highlight Anti-Harassment and Discrimination policy, support, and new tools for bullying and harassment reporting.

- **Implement CEDARS 2025 (March to June) – For Research-Only Staff and Managers of Researchers.** Implement national survey to obtain data about the research environment, working conditions, career aspirations and professional development opportunities of Researchers. Data will be reviewed over the summer against sector benchmarking. A summary report of highlights and lowlights will be circulated and an institutional action plan will be developed.

(322 words)

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (*max 200 words*)

The Concordat annual report is reviewed and approved by the Concordat Working Group, which consists of representatives from: the Careers Centre, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, People Directorate, University and College Union (UCU), Researcher Development and a Research-Only Staff representative from each Faculty.

The report is then submitted to University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) for consideration and approval. Following approval at University RKEC, the annual report is summarised for the Board of Governors and published externally on the University's Concordat web page.

(83 words)

Signature on behalf of governing body: Professor Joe Tah, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation

Contact for queries: Jennie Cripps, Researcher Development Manager,
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This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk