

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

Name of Institution	Oxford Brookes University (OBU)
Reporting period	2022 – 2023 (Report covers Jan 2022 to March 2023. Approved by Concordat Working Group, Apr 2023.)
Date approved by governing body	Approved by University RKEC, 16 th May 2023
Date published online	By July 2023 (revised Concordat annual report submission date has been moved in line with HR Excellence reporting)
Web address of annual report	https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Concordat-to-Support-Researchers
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Concordat-to-Support-Researchers
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Professor Susan Brooks, Director of Researcher Development, sbrooks@brookes.ac.uk
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	16 th May 2023

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 Contract Researchers”, 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 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 can use this space to discuss longer-term career aspirations.

This includes access to training, e.g. mandatory University Research & KE Training (Induction; Navigating Ethics; Data Management; Applying for & Managing External Research Grants; Research Integrity) as well as an array of additional training, covering: e.g. IP, Commercialisation, Public Engagement and Impact, as well as EDI, Leadership, etc. Researchers can also request access to Staff Development Funds to support attendance at external conferences and professional networking events.

Research-Only Staff also have access to careers-specific training (e.g. applying for jobs; preparing for interview) and 1 to 1 advice of the Careers Centre, to discuss career options both within and beyond academia.

In addition, the University runs 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 Faculty. 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. The University has formally signed up to the Race Equality Charter and is working towards its first award. OBU achieved a Stonewall Gold Award 2023 as LGBTQ+ Inclusive Employer.

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, departments take excellent contract researchers into permanent academic positions. During 21/22, five Research Assistants/Research Fellows were recruited into salaried academic roles as Lecturer or Senior Lecturer.

(500 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

We plan to engage in CEDARS 2023 and biennially thereafter. We will use data from our first CEDARS completion to establish our baseline position, in order to plan developments going forward. We aim to achieve a 50% engagement in CEDARS from our researchers (based on our 51% response rate to CROS 2019) and an initial 35% engagement rate from Managers of Researchers in 2023, with the intention of building engagement in CEDARS 2025 and subsequently.

Establishment of a Research-only Staff Network

In response to researcher feedback in focus groups, we have established a new Research-only Staff Network to facilitate their communication, peer group discussion and support. As this is a new initiative, we will support researchers to set up meetings, and support researchers to develop the network as they require, and in response to their feedback 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 new training package for Managers of Researchers and a planned separate one for Researchers, both have a strong emphasis on guidance for effective PDR. We will now monitor uptake and perceived usefulness of PDR by researchers, with a view to developing further actions if necessary. Specific success measures include: we aim to see improved engagement of researchers who have 'participated in appraisal/review' from 60% (CROS 2019) to 80% in CEDARS 2023/2025. In response to the question 'how useful did you find your staff review/appraisal?' we aim that 70% of researchers report it 'useful/very useful' in CEDARS 2023 rising to 75% in CEDARS 2025, based on CEDARS 2021 aggregate results and our CROS 2019 data.

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 package and resource issued to all Managers of Researchers, from April 22 onwards, and development of a new training package and resource issued to all Researchers, for launch July 2023. Packages will highlight key university and external frameworks and policies; they will 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 EXPLORE@Brookes and expansion of our researcher support provision

We have developed new workshops on “Time Management for Researchers” and “Leading a Successful Research Group”. Success measures include e.g. For Time Management, a reported average usefulness rating of 3 or more on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘not very useful ‘ and 5 is ‘extremely useful’.

Please see full **Concordat Institutional Action Plan – Feb 2021** (<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Concordat-to-Support-Researchers>) and **HR Excellence in Research Award 2022-2025 Action Plan** (<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/HR-Excellence-in-Research>) for further details.

(590 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]

Environment and Culture (max 600 words)

Institution – Managers of Researchers training bundle established – On-demand bite-sized training and resources to support Managers of Researchers to meet their Concordat obligations, developed and rolled out to all current Line

Managers of Contract Researchers (April 2022) and to all new managers on a monthly basis going forward.

Content:

- Coaching Principles
- Code of Practice for the Career Management of Contract Research Staff
- Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- External Research Governance – 1 minute videos for busy Managers:
Athena SWAN; Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research; Concordat on Open Research Data; Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers; Concordat to Support Research Integrity; DORA and Responsible Metrics; HR Excellence in Research Award; Knowledge Exchange Concordat; R&D People & Culture Strategy; Race Equality Charter
- How Mentoring can help
- Mental Health & Wellbeing for Researchers
- Performance and Development Review (PDR) for your Contract Researcher
- Signposting Training for Managers
- Supporting Career Development
- Supporting Networking

The package will be evaluated over the next year.

Establishment of University-wide Research-Only Staff Network

to better connect our Contract Researchers with each other for peer support and sharing of ideas, skills, knowledge and experiences, and to facilitate communication between Faculty and University Research & KE Committee (RKEC) Researcher Reps and their respective Researchers. All Contract Researchers are now connected via a group email and shared Google Drive. During semester 2, 21/22, monthly online Network meetings were held. During 22/23, hybrid

	<p>monthly meetings are scheduled, with the option to join face-to-face or online at each meeting.</p> <p>The usefulness of the Network will be evaluated over the next year.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers – To engage with Managers of Researchers training bundle. Detailed feedback will be obtained over the coming year, but early evaluation indicates that it has been well received, for example: “I was unaware of all this help and guidance so this is useful. I've booked onto the Q&A and would be interested in the coaching opportunity when it arises. I will also plan some time to go through the resources.”</p> <p>Researchers – To engage with the Research-Only Staff Network. Evaluation of the Network will be carried out in the next year, but initial feedback indicates that face-to-face meetings have made a difference, and the network is perceived as being supportive: “how lovely to talk to real people! And really helpful - I was able to discuss something with a couple of people that would have taken a whole load of back and forth emails.”</p> <p><i>(407 words)</i></p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution - The People Directorate ran and reported on key messages from a recruitment and selection survey with contract researchers appointed between Jul 2020-Jul 2021 (42% response rate). Overall, the average response for all 6 questions (covering the application process; support and communications from HR; timeliness; interview experience; skills test and overall treatment by the university) was 4.5 out of 5, where 4 is ‘good’ and 5 ‘very good’. Suggestions raised in the survey for improvements to processes (e.g. clearer immigration advice; smoother transition from hourly-paid contract to substantive salaried position) were shared with staff in the People Directorate, to improve processes.</p> <p>Annual action embedded in People Directorate, to send targeted communications to both Researchers and their Line Managers, flagging expectation of PDR for all research-only</p>

staff, and signposting to forms and relevant training for Reviewee and Reviewer.

New resource to help prepare research-only staff to apply for their first academic post created and circulated to delegates of the Research Career Pathways Event, Jan 2022 and added to Managers of Researchers training package on "Supporting Career Development" (Apr 22 onwards).

Research project investigating the experiences of new starters at OBU was undertaken by the Oxford Centre for Academic Enhancement and Development. Focus groups were conducted with academic, professional services and research-only staff participants (n = 43) to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of staff induction processes. Findings were similar across staff types. Key recommendations for Managers were circulated in September 2022 on enhancing local-level support.

Academic Managers of Researchers - A summary report of the recruitment and selection survey and recommendations (e.g. To retain the positives of online interviews post-Covid, and the benefits of meeting with the research group at interview) were shared with Managers of Researchers, Sep 2022, to inform future practice.

A summary report on the new starter induction experience and recommendations (e.g. Frequent one-to-one meetings; assigning a buddy to new staff; introductory meetings with other team members; who/where to go to for quick questions; signposting resources & support) were shared with Managers of Researchers, Sep 2022, to inform future practice.

Researchers – To engage with new resource on preparing for an academic career pathway, if applicable. Delegates of the Researcher Career Pathways Event rated the usefulness of the career development resources made available to them as 5.1 out of 6 (where 1 is not at all useful and 6 is very useful).

	<p>Following annual reminders from the People Directorate, to complete PDR paperwork ahead of PDR meeting with Line Managers, to pro-actively request a PDR, if one has not been arranged. Contract Researcher reported engagement with PDR will be measured through CEDARS, Spring 2023, and further actions taken as necessary.</p> <p><i>(442 words)</i></p>
<p>Professional development (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution - New "Time Management for Researchers" workshop piloted in December 2022 as part of the annual University Research & KE training programme. An evaluation of the usefulness of this workshop is currently being undertaken and it will be reviewed in summer 2023.</p> <p>The new Managers of Researchers training bundle established in 22/23, signposts, amongst other resources, to a suite of relevant training opportunities across the university, for new and established line managers, including: Equality Diversity and Inclusion training, e.g. "Tackling race bias at work"; Leadership and Management workshops, e.g. "Building and leading a resilient team"; Skills Boosters, e.g. "Motivating people"; Management Essentials, covering HR policy, procedures, resources and support; and Personal Effectiveness and Leadership sessions, e.g. "Leading teams".</p> <p>The biennial Researcher Career Pathways Event (established Jan 2014) was held online for the first time online in Jan 2022. The purpose of the event is to support contract research staff to explore using their research skills in careers both within and beyond academia. Inspiring next steps cited by delegates in feedback included: Asking colleagues about their career journeys to academia; broadening horizons to include researching a wider variety of posts beyond academia and research; identifying gaps in the field where future opportunities may lie; applying for funding; getting teaching experience; maintaining mentorship links; publishing; networking; updating CVs; meeting with the Careers Centre and applying for jobs.</p>

The University's Central Research Fund made a Research Culture Award for the provision of external Research Leadership Coaching, to take place during 22/23. 7 awards were made to Managers of Researchers to access Executive Leadership Coaching and 7 awards were made to Research-Only Staff to explore their sense of research identity and development of leadership skills.

Academic Managers of Researchers – To engage with relevant mandatory and suggested leadership and management training and refreshers, as required. An evaluation of the Managers training bundle will be undertaken over the next year.

To apply for and take up external Research Leadership Coaching in 22/23, if required. An evaluation of Research Leadership Coaching will be undertaken over the next year.

Researchers – To engage with Researcher Career Pathways Events. In feedback from the Jan 2022 Pathways Event 100% of respondents (42% response rate) said they would recommend the event to others.

To apply for and engage with external Coaching in 22/23 to explore research identity and develop Research Leadership skills, if required. An evaluation of Research Leadership Coaching will be undertaken over the next year.

(406 words)

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. (max 500 words)

The key focus for this year (22/23) has been on developing and implementing new initiatives, training and resources. Over the coming year we will seek feedback to review these new initiatives and implement improvements from our learning going forward.

One measure of our success this year has been that our Managers of Researchers training bundle was well received by the Researcher Development community. It was delivered at the Vitae International Researcher Development Conference,

13th-15th Sep 2022, (on demand content) and presented at the South East Researcher Development Forum (SERD), 17th October 2022, where a representative of Vitae invited us to submit it to the “Concordat Platform of Practice”, to share good practice more widely. OBU’s submission was published 24th October 2022:

<https://concordatplatformofpractice.vitae.ac.uk/case-studies/a-training-bundle-to-support-managers-of-researchers-to-fulfil-their-concordat-obligations>

Our Managers of Researchers training bundle also featured in Vitae’s Practice Pathways first issue, under “Trailblazers: enhancing leadership skills of researchers”:

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/membership/practice-pathways/enhancing-leadership-skills-of-researchers-for-established-researcher-developers-for-trailblazers>

The Researcher Development team was also invited to present the training bundle at Vitae’s Concordat Thematic Session - “Supporting Managers of Researchers in Meeting their Obligations”, 28th February 2023.

We aim to seek detailed feedback from our Managers to improve this resource over the coming year.

(190 words)

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

Forward look to actions for the following year:

Key actions for next year include:

- Progressing the action to move research-only staff from fixed-term to open-ended contracts. The approach will be to (1) ensure manager training involves developing an understanding of our policy approach, and the implications of fixed-term contracts for individuals and the University, and (2) reviewing existing fixed-term contracts individually with the employing school, beginning with those who have been on contracts longest. This will be underpinned by information gathering to understand where there are trends or 'hot spots' to be addressed.

- Evaluation of Managers of Researchers training bundle and implementation of improvements
- Establishing a Contract Researcher Induction training bundle
- Running the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) in Spring 2023. Establishing baseline data, analysing the results and formulating an action plan
- Evaluation of Time Management for Researchers and implementation of improvements
- Evaluation of usefulness and future of Research-Only Staff Network
- Evaluation of usefulness of external Research Leadership Coaching by Managers of Researchers and Research-Only Staff

(170 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 & Inclusion, People Directorate, Researcher Development and a Research-Only Staff representative from every 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 received at Academic Board for information and reported to the Board of Governors, and is also published externally on the University's Concordat web page.

(87 words)

Signature on behalf of governing body: Professor Linda King, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research & Global Partnerships, laking@brookes.ac.uk

Contact for queries: Jennie Cripps, Researcher Development Co-ordinator, jcripps@brookes.ac.uk

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