

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY – TEN-YEAR REVIEW SUPPORTING STATEMENT

HOW THE INTERNAL EVALUATION WAS UNDERTAKEN

Having held the HREiR award since 2012, consideration of Concordat principles and the HREiR award are firmly embedded in our practice. They are a standing item on the agenda of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). This ensures that both our action plan and consideration of how we address the principles of the Concordat are formally and regularly reviewed in the context of our overarching research strategy. RKEC is an inclusive group, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor Research and Global Partnerships (PVC Research), which encourages and facilitates the input of researchers and their representatives at every level, and across the University. Its membership includes representatives of research-only staff, managers of researchers, and the four Faculty Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange (and others), and its members are responsible for 'feeding down' information to researchers in their areas. There is close two-way communication between the University RKEC and the four Faculty RKECs, which also have research-only staff representation. Thus, our action plans and progress have been regularly, formally reviewed since we first achieved the HREiR award, and views of researchers have been taken into account through embedded formal processes at every stage, including the current ten-year review process.

Having become a signatory to the revised Concordat in May 2020, a Concordat Working Group (CWG) was established. It includes representation from research-only staff in each of the four Faculties and key support from Researcher Development, the Oxford Centre for Academic Enhancement and Development (OCAED, our in-house educational development unit), Brookes careers, the People Directorate, the Race Equality Charter Steering Group and the Research and Business Development Office. All research-only staff were invited to attend a focus group to help identify gaps in our provision in relation to the revised Concordat and shape actions. A draft Concordat gap analysis and action plan were reviewed and agreed by the CWG in Dec 2020. We ran a workshop at the University RKEC Strategy Day in Jan 2021 as an opportunity to highlight the revised Concordat obligations and to generate suggestions for actions from researchers, research leads, managers of researchers, and professional services staff who support research as to what training and support we should develop, particularly for managers of researchers. Around 60 participants were present. The ideas generated were incorporated into our draft Concordat (and, subsequently, HREiR) action plans. All research-only staff and their managers were given the opportunity comment, by email, before the final version of the action plan was approved by RKEC in Feb 2021 (documents can be viewed here – <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/research/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers/>). CWG were consulted on the wording of this statement and our 2022 HREiR action plan, which, since they report our actions to ensure compliance with the Concordat, are based on the above documents. All research-only staff and managers of researchers were again consulted by email before these documents were formally received, discussed and approved at RKEC in May 2022.

Links with other awards and initiatives

In parallel to, and complementing, our ten-year review for the HREiR award, Athena SWAN (AS) work is ongoing at both University and Faculty levels (detailed in our action plan, action EC12(5)). The University has held a 'Bronze' award since 2012, and three of our four Faculties currently hold awards. The Director of Researcher Development, who leads for the HREiR award, also serves on the University AS Steering Group and with the PVC Research, who chairs the group, ensures integration between the two initiatives. Our 2020 action to become a signatory to the Race Equality Charter was delayed because of Covid. However, we became a signatory in Oct 2021, and we are now working towards application for the Charter Mark (action EC12(6)). Again, commonality in goals and actions are shared at University AS meetings to ensure effective communication between teams and integration of initiatives. Oxford Brookes became a signatory to DORA (the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) <https://sfdora.org/> in July 2020.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & PROGRESS AGAINST STRATEGY SINCE 2020

The University becomes a signatory to the revised Concordat (2020 action 14)

A priority action in our 2020 action plan was for the University to become a signatory to the revised Concordat, which we did in May 2020, and to fulfil our responsibilities in terms of raising the visibility of the Concordat and championing and fulfilling its obligations internally at all levels. To this end, all research-only staff and managers of

researchers were informed by email in May 2020 that the University had become a signatory, with an explanation of the purpose of the Concordat and its obligations. New outward-facing and internal Concordat webpages were established. Our Institutional commitment and Concordat obligations are now embedded in mandatory elements of the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange training programme for research-active staff at all levels (part of the EXPLORE@Brookes programme, see below). As described above, we produced and formalised a Concordat gap analysis and action plan, which was approved by RKEC in Feb 2021 and upon which the current HREiR action plan is based.

A revised Code of Practice for the Career Development of Researchers

We reviewed and fully revised our Code of Practice for the Career Management of Contract Research Staff (last revised in 2012) in light of the revised Concordat. A draft was presented to the University's AS Steering Group and the Race Equality Steering Group in Sept 2021, to ensure that the Code, and the University research policies and practices contained within it, are inclusive, equitable and transparent. The revised Code was approved by University RKEC in Oct 2021.

EXPLORE@Brookes – a new professional development framework (2020 actions 2a, 3e, 11b, 13b, 15)

A significant achievement during the past two years was that our new EXPLORE@Brookes programme was planned, developed and received accreditation by Advance HE, as planned, and in spite of the COVID pandemic. It launched at the beginning of academic year 2020-21 and we reported our formal appraisal of the first run of the scheme to RKEC and the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committee (TLEC) in Feb 2022. The programme, which provides knowledge and skills development to support teaching, leadership, research, knowledge exchange and innovation, is a continuing professional development framework for anyone on an academic or research contract. It includes a route for new starters plus an open offer for all research-active staff, including research-only staff, who, for the first time, can access leadership training. The Research and Knowledge Exchange strand of the programme builds on our long-standing and successful researcher development programme (the 'your first three years' programme) and includes, for example, mandatory research induction, and workshops on winning grant funding and managing a research grant. We also developed and delivered a broad suite of completely new content including, 'commercialising an idea, start-ups and spin-outs', 'open research and research integrity', 'navigating the research ethics approvals process', 'data management', 'running a successful conference' and 'embedding impact into your research'. Moreover, all content was developed or adapted for 'hybrid' delivery with a combination of pre-recorded self-directed learning packages and live (online) discussion events.

Improving processes for annual appraisal and career-focussed discussions for researchers (2020 action 2b)

At Brookes, there is an expectation that appraisal, known as performance and development review (PDR), occurs at the beginning of contract and then annually between all researchers and their line managers. We produced a training video on the Concordat and our commitments, which emphasises the importance of PDR, and this was circulated to research-only staff and managers of researchers, and is incorporated into mandatory elements of the EXPLORE@Brookes programme. Our revised Code of Practice includes a section on PDR including expectations, purpose and value in facilitating career development conversations with researchers. We have developed a new webpage with guidance for research-only staff on how to get the most out of their PDR, and a new section to the PDR reviewer guidance on 'supporting research active staff', which links to the Concordat and relevant frameworks, training and development opportunities, resources and funding. It highlights the Concordat obligations on managers to identify, agree and allocate time for the 10 days professional development pro rata per year, and to identify and provide opportunities for researchers to develop their independent identity.

Providing a funding stream to enable researchers to develop an independent research profile (2020 action 3d)

In 2016, we launched a centrally-funded Research Excellence Awards scheme open to all REF-eligible research-active staff, including research fellows, which is now embedded with 20-30 awards made annually. In 2019-20, we launched a separate scheme specifically for contract researchers (other than research fellows) and research technicians, which provides funding for them to lead a small independent project, manage a budget and supervise a summer placement student, plus funding for a development activity such as conference attendance. In 2019-20, seven awards were made totalling £25K; in 2020-21, six awards made totalling £20K; and in 2021-22, five awards were made totalling £19K. All who applied for the scheme in the past two years were successful.

STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS, INCLUDING SUCCESS MEASURES

Further development and evaluation of EXPLORE@Brookes and expansion of our researcher support provision

Having developed, launched and evaluated EXPLORE@Brookes during its first year (2020-21), we will consolidate, improve and expand the programme; for example, EC3(3) by development of a 'time management for researchers' interactive workshop, and PCDM5(1) a new discussion event on 'leading a successful research group' (see actions for associated success measures). In addition, feedback and evaluation of all current and planned content will be reviewed and improvements incorporated going forward. A key element of our forward strategy, ECI2(3), is development of a new training package and resource issued to all managers of researchers, from June 2022, and ECI2(4), development of a new training package and resource issued to all researchers, for launch July 2023. The packages will highlight key policies and documents, including the Concordat and our Code of Practice for the Career Management of Contract Research Staff; they will signpost to resources such as training packages around equality, diversity and inclusion, wellbeing, and careers support; and will provide targeted training resources including, for example, videos with direction (for researchers and their line managers) on how to get the most out of appraisals and career-focussed discussions. Success measures are associated with numerous specific actions. For example, ECI2(6), we action to produce one-minute 'snapshot' videos introducing researchers and managers to a range of initiatives and frameworks of relevance to them (for example, the Concordat, HREiR award, Race Equality Charter etc); our success measures are that we see improvement, by 5-10%, in the proportion of researchers reporting having knowledge and understanding of them in CEDARS 2023 and 2025, in comparison to our CROS 2019 scores.

Employing CEDARS for benchmarking new initiatives and evaluating progress

The University has participated in the CROS for many years, but never in PIRLS, so we have not previously surveyed the experience of our managers of researchers. We planned to take part in CEDARS 2022 but were informed by Vitae that it would not be a benchmarking year. The benchmarking data is critical to our assessing our position in relation to the sector, so we will instead engage in CEDARS 2023 and biennially thereafter. We have used published CEDARS 2021 aggregate data extensively as initial benchmarking for actions in our 2022-25 action plan - particularly those where, in relation to revised Concordat obligations, we need to establish our baseline position in order to plan developments going forward. We view the next three years as key to establishing our position in terms of specific revised Concordat obligations that we have not previously evaluated, and developing new initiatives and actions where appropriate. We aim to achieve a 50% engagement in CEDARS from our researchers (based on our 51% response rate to CROS 2019) and aim for an initial 35% engagement rate from managers of researchers in 2023, with the intention of building engagement in CEDARS 2025 and subsequently (see ECI6(1)).

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 (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, and discussing and agreeing strategies through which the researcher can develop an independent research identity, in line with key Concordat obligations. The new training package for managers of researchers and a separate one for researchers, described above, both have a strong emphasis on guidance for effective PDR. We will now monitor uptake and perceived usefulness of PDR by researchers, as well as their reported engagement in training / professional development activities and development of an independent research profile, with a view to developing further actions if necessary. Specific success measures are given in our action plan against several actions, but, for example, we aim to see improved engagement of researchers who have 'participated in appraisal/review' from 60% (CROS 2019) to 80% in CEDARS 2023/2025 (actions ECI5 and PCDI5(1)). In response to the question 'how useful did you find your staff review/appraisal?' (action PCDI2(2)), 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.

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 (ECR3(3-5)). As this is a new initiative, we will support researchers to set up meetings, including (if they choose) face to face events as Covid restrictions are eased, and support researchers to develop the network as they require, and in response to their feedback going forward.