

2021/22 Annual Report on Oxford Brookes University's Institutional Commitments to

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Background:

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Sep 2019) is an agreement between stakeholders to improve the employment and support for researchers and researcher careers in higher education in the UK. Researchers are defined by the Concordat as contracted staff employed largely or solely for the purposes of research, otherwise referred to at Oxford Brookes University as "Contract Researchers" or "Research-only Staff". Oxford Brookes University became an official signatory in May 2020. The institutional Concordat gap analysis and action plan was approved by University Research & KE Committee (RKEC), 9th Feb 2021.

Strategic Objectives – The 7 Concordat Signatory Responsibilities:

1. Raise the visibility of the Concordat and champion its Principles within Oxford Brookes University at all levels

The Concordat forms part of core University Research & KE training for new research-active staff of all levels (e.g. University Research Induction, Managing grants). Visibility of the Concordat is also promoted in the public-facing University Concordat web pages.

Additional actions completed this year, which further champion the Concordat are outlined in Key Achievements, below.

2. Ensure progress is reviewed and reported on annually

Professor Susan Brooks, Director of Researcher Development, is identified as Senior Manager Champion. An associated group with relevant representation from across the organisation is in place.

Concordat Working Group – current membership:

Dr Sola Adesola - Equality Diversity & Inclusion Lead
Dr Adam Baimel - Early Career Research Fellow - HLS Researcher Rep
Prof. Susan Brooks - Director of Researcher Development
Ben Cooper - HR Business Partnership Manager
Jennie Cripps - Researcher Development Co-ordinator
Dr Jo Moyle - Careers Consultant
Dr Dan O'Gorman - Vice Chancellor's Research Fellow - HSS Researcher Rep
Prof. Jackie Potter - Head of OCSLD & Deputy Director of HR
Dr Maurizio Sibilla - Senior Research Fellow - TDE Researcher Rep
Dr Clare Stovell – Research Fellow - OBBS Researcher Rep
Sarah Taylor - Director of Research Support

Changes to membership:

The Concordat Working Group thanks Dr Juliet Carpenter, TDE Researcher Rep and Dr Heather Griffiths, OBBS Researcher Rep for their valuable contributions. We wish them well in their new roles. The group welcomes Dr Sola Adesola, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead; Dr Maurizio Sibilla, TDE Researcher Rep and Dr Clare Stovell, OBBS Researcher Rep.

The Concordat Working Group takes responsibility for annual review of progress towards achieving the Institutional Concordat actions and reports this formally to University RKEC.

3. Ensure that Researchers are formally represented in developing and monitoring organisational efforts to implement the Concordat Principles

All Research-only staff and their Line Managers had the opportunity to shape the institutional action plan, to implement the Concordat Principles, before it was finalised and approved by University RKEC. Researchers were actively encouraged to participate in a focus group which shaped the gap analysis and formed the basis for actions. There is representation from Researchers in different disciplines, from all 4 Faculties, on the Concordat Working Group, which is responsible for the ongoing annual monitoring of the implementation of the institutional Concordat action plan.

Researchers are also formally represented at Faculty and University RKEC, which consults on the development of research strategy and policy.

4. Undertake a gap analysis to compare institutional policies and practice against the Concordat Principles

A gap analysis was undertaken to review current University policies and practice against each of the Institutional Commitments outlined in the Concordat. This was approved by University RKEC, Feb 2021.

5. Draw up and publish an action plan within a year of signing the Concordat

An institutional action plan was approved by University RKEC (Feb 2021) and published on the externally-facing web pages (Mar 2021) within 12 months of signing the Concordat.

6. Set up processes for systematically and regularly gathering the views of our Researchers, to inform and improve the organisation's approach to and progress on implementing the Concordat

Current mechanisms exist for direct consultation with Researchers (e.g. at University-wide level via the Researcher Development Co-ordinator; via formal Committees - Faculty and University RKEC). The University also systematically gathers the formal views of its Researchers, through past participation in the national Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and going forward through the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS). The ongoing action plan sets out measures to enhance communication by establishing Researcher Networks.

7. Produce an annual report to the Institution's governing body or equivalent authority (to include strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plan and progress), which subsequently is publicly available

This annual report will be submitted to University RKEC for review and approval, and onwards communication to Academic Board. The annual report should also be reported to the Board of Governors, to meet our institutional commitments to the Concordat. Following approval at University RKEC, it will subsequently be posted on an externally-facing Concordat web page.

Report on Progress – Highlights from the last 12 months:

A full update on progress towards implementing each of the actions listed in the institutional action plan can be found in the "Concordat Institutional Action Plan – Update on Progress" table. A summary of key achievements in the last year is listed below:

- New training video produced explaining the importance of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, for Researchers and their Managers.
- New Concordat intranet page established (<https://intranet.brookes.ac.uk/research-support/researcher-development/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers-internal/>) to embed the new Concordat training video and publish the full institutional gap analysis and action plan internally.
- 2012 “Code of Practice for the Career Management of Researchers” revised in line with institutional commitments to the 2019 Concordat Principles. A draft was presented at the University’s Athena SWAN Steering Group 15th Sep 2021 and the Race Equality Steering Group 22nd Sep 2021, and the Code was reviewed for inclusivity, equity and transparency. The revised Code was approved by University RKEC, 12th Oct 2021 and published on the University’s “Policies, procedures and codes of practice” web page.
- Survey to gather views on how well the University performed in the recruitment and selection process was circulated to research-only staff recruited during 20/21. Feedback on positively regarded aspects of the process, communications and support, plus suggested improvements to processes was taken forward by HR and will be shared with Managers.
- From July 2021 onwards, monthly HR reports of all new research-active staff circulated to Research Managers in all Faculties, to facilitate identification for Faculty Research Induction.
- In response to feedback from Researchers, the role of Researcher Rep at University RKEC was clarified, outlining time commitments (meetings, away days, term of membership) and focus (strategy/policy development and implementation, consultation with other Researchers across the University, forward plan).
- New, transparent nomination process established for appointing the Research-only Rep at University RKEC, with the appointment voted in entirely by Research-only staff.
- Clarity received from University RKEC Chair that all Faculty RKECs should have Contract Researcher representation and that person should be on a Research-only contract.
- New web page added to the Performance and Development Review (PDR) Reviewee guidance, specifically for Research-only staff (<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/human-resources/working-here/learning-and-career-development/pdr/reviewee-guidance-for-research-only-staff/>).
- New section added 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.
- Targeted communications from HR to Researchers and their Managers, flagging the expectation of PDR for all Research-only staff, and linking to PDR forms and PDR training for Reviewer and Reviewee. This will now form part of the annual PDR cycle.

- New BRIDGE programme (Building Researchers Innovation & Developing Goals with Enterprise), opened to research-only staff who wish to deliver impact from their research through entrepreneurship.

Ongoing actions for the forward plan are reflected in the “Concordat Institutional Action Plan – Update on Progress” table.

Jennie Cripps, Researcher Development Co-ordinator – 17th Dec 2021

Annual report reviewed and approved by Concordat Working Group – 5th Jan 2022

Annual report reviewed and approved by University RKEC – 1st Feb 2022.