

Response to survey on the review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Submitted: 30 November 2017

Questions from survey on review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Section C: The impact of the Concordat on your institution / organisation

5. To what extent does your organisation support researchers in line with the Principles of the Concordat? [No US response]

- Extensively
- A small amount
- Very little / not at all
- Don't know

6. Have any of these activities taken place within your organisation as a direct consequence of the Concordat? Yes / No / Don't know for each: [No US response]

- Organisational restructuring
- Major changes to recruitment / employment practices
- Influence on contract types
- Creation of support staff roles
- Influence on policies
- Provision of researcher/career development activities
- Creation of researcher-led groups/committees

7. Please provide a brief commentary explaining the impact of the Principles of the Concordat on you / your organisation.

Use quantitative examples wherever possible and provide web links to any relevant information which supplements your response (NB you do not need to provide links to documents which are already publicly available, such as HR Action Plans). (Max. 300 words)

Across our membership (19 Scottish HEIs) we received examples of how the changes have been made to institutional policy and practice to reflect the principles of the Concordat. Although feedback shows that the Concordat is a useful framing document and has assisted in focusing effort (for example one institution noted its importance in leveraging internal funding and support for researcher development) it is not necessarily the primary or only driver to support change within institutions. It has been an important tool to raise awareness and share good practice in this field.

Our view is that the Concordat should support institutions to attract, develop and retain the most talented researchers from around the world to enable the world-leading research base. To do so a future Concordat should continue to give a framework and enable institutions to develop provision as suits the local research community. There is a need for changes to make the Concordat more up-to-date, particularly by streamlining, and articulating areas of focus more clearly (whether new areas or updating the Concordat to recognise the work of the sector and focus on developing areas). For example it could be useful to restructure the Concordat so responsibilities are described for each group (researchers, line managers, institution etc.) which could be summarised as check-lists or in a matrix to make the Concordat more 'user-friendly'.

In terms of this review concerns have been noted that the questions in this survey contain a bias in that there is an assumption of support for the Concordat, the Concordat in its current structure and current mechanisms associated with review.

Section D: Further evidence

The independent Expert Review Panel has considered evidence relating to the impact of the Concordat. Such evidence has included:

- Background information about the Concordat and its management / implementation
- Information about other Concordats and related reviews in the UK and internationally
- Information from researcher surveys (especially Careers in Research Online Survey and Principle Investigators and Research Leaders Survey)
- A selection of Higher Education Institution (HEI) HR Action Plans and review reports, to demonstrate the role of the HR Excellence in Research Awards in implementing the Concordat
- HEI and business strategies for the management of researchers
- Funder support for researchers

8. Is there any further evidence that the Expert Review Panel should take into consideration when reviewing the Concordat? (Yes/No)

If Yes:

8a: What is the nature of the information?

The Review may consider:

- *Athena SWAN action plans*
- *In Scotland there are requirements on HEIs under the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) including reporting on equality and diversity – this information may be beneficial to the review group*
- *Individual institutions may have strategies pertaining to areas of focus that are more holistic in terms of the institution but impact this community e.g. health and wellbeing strategies*

8b: Why is it important?

It is important to capture good practice in encouraging equality and diversity in research careers and principle 6 should underpin all other activity.

8c: Where / how it can be accessed?

- *Via institutional websites and ECU*
- *For an example of PSED please see: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/hr/equality/psed/>*

Section E: The Future of the Concordat

9. Do any of the Principles of the Concordat require updating? (Yes/No)

If Yes:

9a: Which Principle(s) require updating and why? (tick all that apply and provide brief explanation, max. 100 words)

- Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection

Many institutions have highlighted examples of principle 1 as 'standard HR practice' so there may be scope for streamlining here.

- Principle 2: Recognition and Value

There is support for clearer articulation of expectations of supporting career development for supervisors/academic line managers in a future iteration. There may be scope for this to be a new area or a clearer focus within an existing principle.

- Principle 3: Adaptability and flexibility in a diverse research environment
- Principle 4: Career development and lifelong learning

There is overlap between principles 3 & 4; streamlining would be beneficial.

There is scope for a new statement to more explicitly recognise the value of non-academic careers and that moving into industry, teaching etc. is an equally valuable destination for the individual and is a significant benefit arising from the research base to UK economy and society. This may include expectations around wider employability opportunities.

There are a number of wider demands on researchers through Concordats focussing on research integrity, public engagement and open data therefore reference to training and development across these Concordats would be a valuable addition.

- Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

There is a need to be realistic about the number of posts available in academia and the importance of researchers engaging with broader opportunities related to employability, improving their awareness of careers outside academia, and taking responsibility for career planning and skills development at an early stage.

Recognising the work within institutions it would be appropriate that the principle of researcher responsibility for career development is emphasized and features as the first principle of the Concordat.

- Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

There is much work in this area (see Athena Swan and PSED) and it may be possible to rationalise this section without diluting its importance.

- Principle 7: Implementation and Review

A key issue raised in responses is a lack of data about the destinations (and previous experience) of researchers on short-term contracts. The revised Concordat could support greater data collection and review to better understand the career destinations of those who have been employed to undertake research.

Of course there are questions over the impact of Brexit on the HR Excellence Award. Given this is the main route through which commitment to the Concordat is currently assessed there is a need to articulate the future approach.

10. Are there any new Principles needed in a future version of the Concordat? (Yes/No)

If Yes:

10a. Please provide details of any new Principles(s) (max 100 words)

Given the demanding nature of research careers, a greater focus on the mental health and wellbeing of members of the research community would be welcome.

The Concordat should support researchers to prepare for their future careers, irrespective of 'where' those individuals go, and what stage they are at - this should be explicit.

It would be useful to understand how redevelopment of the Concordat fits with the creation and focus of UKRI