

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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	[Institute of Cancer Research]
Reporting period	[Nov 2024 – Nov 2025]
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Web address of annual report	<u>Responsibilities</u>
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	<u>Responsibilities</u>
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**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*)**

***Creates:***

- All staff joining the ICR participate in our Supportive Workplace & Active Bystander training, held in person rather than online to enable new starters to meet one another and form connections
- All scientific staff also participate in a mandatory Research Integrity workshop, emphasising the role that all members of a research team have in shaping a positive research culture, minimising the potential for questionable research practices to occur.
- The ICR has active staff networks including a Scientific Officer Association, a Postdoc Association, a CDF network and a Student Committee which meet regularly. Researchers can either participate in these meetings ad hoc or volunteer for specific roles including reps on formal institutional committees. Staff networks have an annual budget to support networking and social events across our two sites or initiatives of their own choosing such as offering travel and training bursaries.
- In July 2025 we reviewed and refreshed our researcher distribution lists to ensure researchers were receiving timely communications about the associations and the initiatives they run within their first month of joining. Whilst this is not currently an automated process we are working with the team implementing our new ERP to create these staff groupings at point of joining.
- Members of the learning and development team sit on each of the staff networks to promote two-way communication, share resources, alumni speakers and workshop ideas, whilst seeking to incorporate expectations of external frameworks e.g. Researcher Concordat and Technician Commitment into the activities delivered.

***Maintains:***

- ICR typically carries out a full staff survey every 3 years with a shorter pulse survey in between. Results are then analysed by research division, gender and staff group (though with no intersectional analysis of the above categories to preserve anonymity). A pulse survey was run in May 2025 to explore the topic of 'engagement'. Questions were selected which could be benchmarked to other, similar organisations. Results from the survey were

shared with staff at open briefings and via our internal news pages, with further follow up discussions with the staff associations.

- As well as overall and divisional scores, Heads of Division were provided with the key themes emerging from the free text comments in their divisions and encouraged to initiate follow up conversations about what is working well and what may need to improve locally.
- Management Committee have asked that from 2026 ICR explores 'engagement' at a 'team' rather than 'divisional' level. Whilst there are 7 research divisions at the ICR, team-based reporting will give individual research teams a better insight to the what's working well and areas where they can work together to strengthen their research culture.
- Full and pulse surveys will share a 'core' of engagement questions, with the overall number of questions reduced from the current set of 60 questions to a shorter set of 30 which map to organisational KPIs (e.g. the HR Excellence in Research Action plan) with the majority of these benchmarkable externally.
- Impartial careers support offered to all researchers (for up to 12 months after leaving ICR or up to 3 years for students) via the University of London Careers Service. This includes: 1:1s and tailored sessions to support career paths within and beyond academia. The annual programme is designed following the results of an annual training survey run each summer. Research degree supervisors were reminded of the career support available as part of the new refresher training introduced in 2024/2025

***Embeds:***

- The current employee assistance programme is now in its second year and for ease of access is permanently linked on the intranet landing page. Live webinars and upcoming sessions e.g. 'managing change well' are highlighted in the weekly staff news bulletin with a bank of resources also available on-demand. The provider also offers 24/7 counselling, legal and financial advice and can be accessed by phone, whatsapp or online. Overall numbers accessing the portal and requesting consultations are tracked by the Wellbeing manager and reported to the ICR's Health Safety and Environment Committee
- Researchers also have access to 'Report and Support' where they can disclose (anonymously, or not) incidences of unwelcome behaviour such as bullying, harassment, racial discrimination or sexual misconduct – overall numbers reporting via the portal all also tracked by the Wellbeing manager and reported to the ICR's Health Safety and Environment Committee

- Research integrity workshops are reinforced by all ICR group leaders via local training within their own teams. Training materials and resources are shared annually to remind group leaders of their responsibility to do this. We are now gathering and sharing examples of good research practices which have been shared by group leaders and participants of the classroom session to be able to share examples of good practice internally and further promote a positive research culture.
- Leadership and research culture expectations and behaviours are systematically incorporated into our staff development programmes such as Pathway to Independence, Aurora, Leadership in a Lab Environment, EMBO Lab Leadership programme to give participants a strong grounding whether they establish teams here or elsewhere
- The annual concordat report is shared annually at the Research Strategy Board September meeting before final sign off at Board of Trustees meeting in November

**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 – A zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment with a focus on promoting high standards of research integrity, honesty, and openness across the organisation.**

- The ‘Report and Support’ online reporting tool was launched and endorsed by the Chief Executive it is now permanently linked on the intranet landing page for ease of access
- The mandatory Supportive Workplace and active bystander training is regularly reviewed and enhanced and currently covers the following topics:
  - Our ICR culture*
  - Addressing non-inclusive behaviour*
  - Active bystander training*
- The full engagement survey will continue to ask about experience of bullying and harassment in previous 12 months (in response to Wellcome Trust research culture report). Other repeat questions are linked to HREiR or Athena SWAN KPIs

- A suite of Research Culture workshops were co-developed in 2023/4 by Learning and Organisational Development, HR Business Partners and research teams in response to local survey results and are now available for any teams requiring input/support in this area – including support in developing team charters and agreed ways of working
- Research Integrity course undertaken by all new scientific staff includes
  - case studies on the themes of open and inclusive research practices
  - being an active bystander when presented with evidence of research misconduct
  - understanding the policies and processes for investigating research misconduct at the ICR
- The 2025 pulse survey aimed to explore current levels of ‘engagement’ and asked the following questions, the majority of which can be benchmarked externally by survey providers:
  - *I feel able to speak up if something is bothering me at work*
  - *I feel able to sustain my current pace of work over the long term without it affecting my wellbeing*
  - *The people I work with treat each other with respect*
  - *I believe things will get better if there are problems at work*

## Employment

**We want to attract and recruit the best postdoctoral researchers to help us deliver our research strategy, including those in postdoc equivalent roles (e.g. senior analytical scientist, informatician and principal statistician grades) who we deem essential to the success of our organisation**

- Postdoctoral vacancies are now linked to the ICR’s external Postdoc Association pages so that potential applicants can get a better insight to the community and the support available to them should they be successful in their application
- Since 2024 all job adverts are run through a gender decoder to ensure language is gender neutral
- In 2024 postdoc salary scales were adjusted following a benchmarking exercise to ensure we continue to be able to attract and retain talented postdocs. We are now close to what other comparator institutions e.g. Imperial and the Crick are offering and significantly higher than other London institutions.
- ICR will review these annually to ensure we can remain competitive in the face of a challenging financial climate

- We have continued to roll out the new in-person recruitment training introduced in 2024 for all hiring managers. Topics include: unconscious bias and good recruitment practice e.g. blind shortlisting. Approximately 100 hiring managers have now attended with the sessions scheduled approx. 5 times per year.
- To ensure consistency of approach, all faculty appointments are now centralised through our Faculty Recruitment and Promotion Committee.
- The revised Tenure Assessment Process (TAP) has now taken place for 6 Career Development Faculty since its introduction in Nov 2024 (100% success rate) with feedback gathered from those who were assessed, to enable improvements/adjustments to the admin processes.
- Tenure Assessment Process has been aligned with Readership criteria to make for a smooth transition from CDF to reader where the TAP is successful
- The ICR is in the process of implementing a comprehensive ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) providing better integration of HR and financial processes e.g.
  - Enabling clearer communications towards the end of funding streams so that extensions, next steps and career support for individuals can be more actively managed and be more joined up
  - Enabling a smoother onboarding process so that new starter information and expectations e.g. our postdoc codes of practice and clearer signposting around postdoc training and support offered at different points in the postdoc journey
  - Provide high quality applicant information to enable better and more complete EDI monitoring and action planning

### **Professional Development of Researchers**

**ICR postdocs and equivalent early career researcher grades are offered high quality training, development opportunities and support to successfully deliver our research strategy and for these future leaders to have an impact in their time at ICR and beyond.**

- A new role of Postdoc Dean has been created to enhance the postdoc training offered at ICR and build networking and collaboration opportunities for postdocs beyond the ICR to support the transition to research independence

- Expectations around 10 days of professional development per year has been rolled out amongst postdoc and equivalent grades since 2020. A CDP policy will be introduced in 2025 to extend this expectation to all staff
- The new ERP will include a 'Learn' module where researchers can access a range of on-demand training to support their professional development in addition to the live training sessions which make up the researcher development programme
- The ERP will enable researchers and their managers to agree goals which can be regularly updated and reviewed by both parties as well as a place to record development activities internally or externally (e.g. conference presentations and lab visits)
- Appraisals/professional development reviews will form part of an integrated workflow in the new ERP, giving more visibility of the skills and expertise of researchers

**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

- Review of the report and support platform following first 12/24 months and feedback from users – this includes adding a clear statement of who at ICR will view the submissions (now in place), this is the Wellbeing Coordinator only who will then triage and escalate as necessary.
- Having a faculty panel co-delivering the Research Integrity sessions each month has the added advantage that all Faculty receive a periodic refresher on the Concordat expectations and support available.
- Examples of good research practices taking place across teams are gathered in the Research Integrity course and shared with group leaders as part of the supplementary training resources (a recommendation of the updated Research Integrity Concordat). This rich bank of examples ranges reflects the different types of research at the ICR from wet lab to computational work to clinical practice.

- The ICRs annual Research Integrity report is submitted annually and details enhancements brought in over the last 12 months – e.g. exploring expanding the course audience to include those who work closely with researchers such as the research operations and business and innovation teams.
- In 2024 supervisor training was refreshed and mandated for all researcher degree supervisors. The session was designed as peer to peer learning with discussion focussed on 3 case studies on the themes of:
  - fostering a good research culture
  - managing stress and wellbeing
  - managing the transition to research degrees from taught courses
  - giving appropriate feedback

Over 60 faculty have attended to date, and the course received excellent feedback and will continued to be delivered throughout 2025, with an online option to reach all supervisors and adapted case studies to reflect live topics of interest.

#### Academic Managers of Researchers

- Learning and Organisations Development are offering bespoke research culture sessions within departments or at team away days – including developing team charters and ways of working. Institute-wide comes drafted with groups who accessed these to share how their teams have benefited and encourage others to benefit from the materials that were developed
- Following the supervisor training refresher, a resource sheet prepared to offer support and signposting for supervisors on a host of wellbeing concerns
- By participating in the Supervisor Refresher sessions, supervisors have contributed their learning

experience to the course and enriched the advice available to new supervisors in subsequent sessions (captured in the form of facilitator notes)

- Attitude and pulse survey responses are analysed by staff group, meaning we can capture the views of academic managers of researchers e.g. for questions including: I feel able to sustain my current pace of work over the long term without it affecting my wellbeing providing a quantifiable indication of whether additional support or resources are needed for this group
- Above and Beyond awards now embedded in our annual recognition programme and help to spotlight good leadership practice e.g. outstanding teams and supervisor
- Ahead of appraisals, managers are provided with at-a-glance crib sheets on a variety of topics including giving feedback and managing absence as well as a brochure called 'Developing your Team' which is updated annually with new opportunities.
- The newly appointed postdoc Dean will meet 1:1 with faculty and present a faculty retreat to reiterate the expectation on group leaders when it comes to supporting their postdocs to successfully transition to leadership roles in academia or industry

#### Researchers

- All new staff continue participate in mandatory active bystander/supportive workplace training and all scientific staff also participate in research integrity.
- As part of these sessions researchers are asked to contribute good practices they have observed so they can be shared and adopted by others
- Early career researchers co-develop and co-deliver an annual programme of events for their peers like the postdoc away day and careers conference, suggesting topics and speakers to role model a positive research

	<p>culture. &gt;70 postdoc signups for 2025 career event which saw them invite postdoc alumni now having an impact in a variety of scientific roles. Feedback confirmed that co-developing in this way makes for a programme that researchers are invested in, find relevant and give up their time to attend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sessions added to the development programme aim to prepare postdocs for careers in and beyond academia e.g. the YES entrepreneurship scheme and sessions on ‘establishing your research niche’ and ‘developing leadership skills for emerging researchers’</li> <li>• In 2024 awareness of the Researcher Concordat was at 74%, it also now forms part of the induction checklist to ensure postdocs are aware of their development time as soon as they start.</li> <li>• The annual Researcher Concordat report has been going to research strategy board since 2023, meaning leadership also have increased awareness of it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Employment (max 600 words) START HERE</b></p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR policy library was reviewed and updated throughout 2024/25 to guide many of the processes and functions in the new ERP e.g. flexible working policy, increasing transparency and visibility of organisational processes for all</li> <li>• All job adverts are now run through a gender decoder to ensure language is gender neutral – new ERP will enable us to track EDI recruitment data to ensure these are having a positive impact on inclusive recruitment practice.</li> <li>• Implementation of the new ERP will provide numerous benefits in support of concordat principles including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<i>Better visibility of and therefore support for researchers facing contract transitions or redundancy</i></li> <li>-<i>Clarity around career paths where these do exist at ICR</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*-Better visibility of the additional roles and responsibilities/workload between researchers and their managers*  
*-Standardising organisational processes for onboarding a-typical joiners such as clinical research fellows*

#### Academic Managers of Researchers

- Since its launch in March 2024, c.100 hiring managers have so far participated in the updated in-person recruitment training with a focus on unconscious bias and good recruitment practice.
- Short interactive sessions have been also delivered to research teams and the CDF (tenure track group leaders) network by HR business partners, covering key employment topics which are relevant to embedding our Concordat principles including: recruitment, probation, flexible working, managing absence. We continue to work with HR business partners to suggest practical topics and case studies for these sessions.

#### Researchers

- Researchers regularly express an interest in knowing where alumni go. Our last alumni survey, ran in 2023 establishing that 78% of postdoc alumni remain research active and 100% of responders continue to contribute to the wider scientific ecosystem (including research-related and research support roles). These data are shared at postdoc retreats or away days. We also track the next destinations of alumni attending our Pathway to Independence programme to understand success rates in securing positions as research group leaders (>55% within three years of participating)
- Following feedback from our Academic Board (researchers and their managers) we have clarified the definition of postdoc **equivalent** roles at the ICR to be inclusive of non-standard PDTFs such as

	<p>analytical scientist or statistician and methodologist career paths and the definitions are now captured as part of our Postdoc Codes of Practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the June 2025 postdoc careers conference, a poll found that 80% of attendees would recommend the ICR to prospective postdocs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</b></p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At ICR we expect that a minimum of 10 days professional development should be discussed, planned and recorded as part of appraisal process is currently included in the induction paperwork ensuring managers and researchers are aware from the outset. Reminder communications then follow when the appraisal round opens – awareness of this was over 73% amongst postdocs in 2024</li> <li>• A more structured professional development offering for postdocs forms part of the aims of the Postdoc Dean. We will explore using the new ERP ‘Learn’ module to centralise the offer and Concordat expectations for all postdoc grades</li> <li>• A Learning and Development policy is scheduled for final approval by the end of 2025 - communications re: the expectation of 10 days professional development time for all staff will be communicated to all managers thereafter.</li> <li>• Data collection as part of the 2024 appraisal documentation showed that 68% of ICR postdocs were taking up 10 or more days of professional development that year (up from 15% in the first year). This highlights the impact of embedded communications to researchers and their managers – it has not been possible to collect this figure for 2025 due to a change in appraisal process but the expectation is that once it is relaunched via the ERP, it will once again become possible to track.</li> <li>• During the annual postdoc conference (June 2025) participants were asked in a live poll what the 3 best things about being a postdoc at ICR were. Number 1</li> </ul>

was 'career development opportunities' (followed by the facilities and resources and excellence of the research done here)

- The 'Learn' module of the new ERP will make it possible to create learning pathways, recommend and report on training uptake by different researcher groups to support professional development and manage career transitions with visibility given to both the research and their manager to enhance career development conversations.
- The ICR postdoc alumni LinkedIn group now has c.300 members, providing a source of external mentors, information about other research organisations which is promoted regularly to current postdocs and the Postdoc Association.

#### Academic Managers of Researchers

- One of the benefits of the "Learning" module within the new ERP is that it will give managers sight of the training undertaken by team members
- Goals and objectives will also exist as live documents in the "Talent" module for both parties to review periodically throughout the year, putting less emphasis on a single appraisal.
- The 'Developing your Team' brochure was previously shared with managers only however researchers requested for it to be shared with all staff to enable all parties to prepare well for their review meetings

#### Researchers

- In the guidance given to researchers and their managers re: the 10 days of professional development per year, it is made clear that it is researcher's responsibility to plan, discuss and then record this on the system – the new ERP system will make this to be visible to both parties throughout the year

- Postdoc and Student Association presidents were offered first refusal of places on collaborative Leadership in Action course hosted by KCL to acknowledge the importance of their leadership roles and the additional time and effort they put into supporting ICR's researcher community – strong feedback continues to be received from those who participate in the course.
- We have added wording into the 2025 Postdoc Codes of Practice re: postdocs formalising their Associate Supervisor status in PhD student projects, this was welcomed by researchers and faculty to ensure they are being recognised for their contribution to the development of other early career researchers. This is particularly relevant at ICR where there are no undergraduate teaching opportunities.

**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)**

**1. Engagement Surveys**

-Research leaders have fed back that there needs to be a clear distinction between whether questions are measuring engagement at the level of the research team/peers/immediate manager and those issues which pertain to the wider organisation and that the manager will be less likely to influence, where this is left open to interpretation the outputs are less actionable. As a result, the 2026 survey will look to explicitly group questions in these two distinct categories.

-ICR leadership have asked that future surveys move to team based reporting, offering more local ownership of survey results and the activities they would like to prioritise. From speaking to peers, we anticipate that this move could impact on overall response rates and so we will work with managers and their teams to encourage participation and offer reassurance around minimum reporting numbers e.g.– will not report on groups of <10 people

**2. Joint working across professional service directorates**

– In addition to reviewing processes as they will be in the new ERP system, professional service directorates have worked together to pool knowledge and expertise to benefit the researchers:

-We have reviewed the process for onboarding new group leaders with refreshed guidance and support to help them identify an internal mentor for the duration of their CDF and linked this to the midterm and NTL processes

- Refreshed supervisor training - Peer to peer interactive discussions have proved to be a very positive format for supervisor training, enabling learning and advice sharing between those with more and those with less supervisory experience. The course format means that each session can evolve organically to cover those of most interest to the participants or which the Academic Deans Team would like to have a particular focus on

-The Research Grants team presented at the Postdoc Away day to offer an Introduction to Fellowships as part of the day rather than as a separate event, with additional follow on sessions available. This introduced what can be a niche topic to a wider audience and offered some structured next steps to find out more.

- Research Support team coordinate a grant information library to pool the expertise that exists in different pockets of the ICR and make it available to all researchers. Subject matter experts across professional services can edit and update the resource in real time. Feedback from those approaching L&D for 1:1 support found it extremely helpful to have a curated back of information held in one place.

-Continuing the PhD/Postdoc mentoring scheme that was requested by the students and has seen several successful pairings in the 2024/25

### **3. Reporting and monitoring**

-Delivering the ERP will be a large organisational task. With an 'adopt, not adapt' approach. The first step has been to map out and agree each key processes so that processes link together rather than being siloed across different platforms at present

-In the transition period of moving appraisals from Docusign to our new ERP we have not been able to collect 2025 data on the number of postdoc researchers taking up the full 10 days of training. The new ERP will make it possible to report on the uptake of the 10 days and give insight into the development opportunities being taken

-Its Talent module will enable goal setting and training to be visible to researchers and their managers and will include a bank of development

opportunities to encourage researchers to think beyond training to opportunities that will help them to grow.

#### 4. Leadership

- A Postdoc Dean has been appointed in Sept 2025 supported by a cross-professional services working group to help drive the priorities for our Concordat action plans including: Communications and Development, Research Support and Learning and Development to address some key areas where we want to better support our postdoctoral researchers
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Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period  
(max 500 words)

- **Engagement Surveys**
  - Improve design of engagement surveys to be able to glean more actionable insights in future surveys e.g. moving to team-based reporting
  - Use independent focus groups to manage the change in approach to survey reporting, promote what it will enable re: ownership and accountability of results and local activities to enhance our research culture
- **Cross working for successful ERP role out**
  - Have researchers and their managers in mind when testing and launching new ERP processes to ensure it supports the principles of the Researcher Concordat and has added value for them– eg clear signposting of opportunities, induction plans and development opportunities
- **Leadership**
  - Support the newly appointed postdoc dean and the working group to agree priorities and feed these into the Concordat action plan with clear success measures.

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 Researcher Concordat Working Group meet to review and update the action plans (HR Excellence in Research). The working group feed into monthly Postdoc Association meetings with an annual report prepared and presented at Research*

*Strategy Board for comments and approval (November meeting). The report then goes to Board of Trustees (December meeting) for final sign off and is then shared on our external website with our HR Excellence in Research action plans.*

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries:

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](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

[www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk)