

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

Universities and Research Institutes

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| Name of Institution | [Institute of Cancer Research] |
| Reporting period | [Nov 2023 – Nov 2024] |
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| Web address of annual report | [https://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/our-strategy/responsibility-and-sustainability] |
| Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage | [https://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/our-strategy/responsibility-and-sustainability] |
| Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development | [Dr Elise Glen] |
| Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk | [13 th Dec 2024] |

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:

- Active staff group networks (e.g. Scientific Officer and Postdoc Associations) who meet monthly and contribute members to the Researcher Concordat, Technician Commitment, Athena SWAN and Equality Steering Groups – shaping and supporting the organisational priorities e.g. recently updated shared parental leave policy
- These groups are given an annual budget to promote a positive research environment e.g. away days to promote cross site networking and administering their own travel and training bursaries to champion professional development
- Flagship Pathway to Independence programme has been extended to external collaborators and funders to ensure a strong, diverse postdoc cohort and future network for those wanting to pursue an independent academic career

Maintains:

- All-staff surveys are conducted triennially, with shorter pulse surveys in between – results can be broken down by different staff groups. Results then communicated and discussed with the staff groups. Action plans are subsequently developed and monitored by ICR's Management Committee
- The survey data allows us to put KPIs in place so that we can evaluate impact and progress on key areas e.g. wellbeing and job satisfaction which are then monitored within our HR Excellence in Research action plan.
- All staff have access to the Employee Assistance Programme - available 24/7 and a free & confidential service, which provides counselling, legal and financial information and life coaching
- Impartial careers support offered to all researchers (for up to 12 months after leaving ICR or up to 3 years for students). This includes: 1:1s and tailored sessions to support career paths within and beyond academia.
- Staff groups encourage their communities to shape the researcher development programme throughout the year via the annual training

survey e.g. request this year for new sessions to support appraisal preparation.

- Current postdocs are encouraged to join the ICR's alumni LinkedIn group (n>300) to build connections with alumni who can offer them industry insights and mentorship

Embeds:

- Introduction of 'Report and Support' an online reporting tool where users can disclose (anonymously or otherwise) incidences of unwelcome behaviour such as bullying, harassment, racial discrimination or sexual misconduct – usage and trends monitored by HR leadership team and summary statistics shared quarterly with all staff for transparency
- Research Integrity sessions with a Faculty panel run monthly and are now mandatory within first 6 months of starting at ICR. In addition, annual sessions are held locally within teams to focus on particular topics of interest (training materials to support these team sessions are made available to Group Leaders)
- The Learning and Organisational Development team support annual staff group/lab away days/careers conferences for students and postdocs to embed Researcher Concordat principles and expectations
- Group leaders contribute to our Postdoc induction sessions, to help outline expectations and ensure postdocs get the most from their training contract.
- Researcher Concordat annual reporting has been revised so that the annual report prepared by the Research Concordat Working Group goes to the Research Strategy Board September meeting and then to Board of Trustees for final sign off 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.

- Triennial staff survey was enhanced to include question explicitly asking about experiencing bullying and harassment in previous 12 months (in response to Wellcome Trust research culture report)
- Our HR excellence action plan includes KPIs (based on % satisfaction/agreement with a number of repeat survey questions) so that we can clearly track progress and impact on the ICRs environment and culture
- The ‘Report and Support’ online reporting tool was launched and endorsed by the Chief Executive, with usage stats made available to all staff as a quarterly update for transparency.
- A suite of Research Culture workshops/support made available including whole-team training, which have been piloted and received excellent feedback.
- Postdoc Codes of Practice are shared with all new postdoc hires, highlighting our Concordat expectations of them and their managers in promoting a good research culture, including take up of 10 days per year of professional development.
- All new scientific staff must undertake Research Integrity training within their probation period –the course uses case studies to explore good publication practice, attribution of credit and research misconduct. It consistently receives excellent feedback (including from the group leaders who participate) for its relevance and interactive approach
- Stress Awareness training introduced and made mandatory for all staff – the triennial attitude survey includes a question asking all staff about their ability to complete work within contracted hours (and where they don’t, whether they feel under pressure or do so willingly) to help us monitor trends/changes in this key area. A suite of resources to support managers has also been produced.

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

- Additional pages have been added to the ICR's external website to showcase postdoc opportunities at the ICR including information about the postdoc community, its role in promoting a positive research culture and the development opportunities that are available. It includes case studies of current and former postdocs.
- All job adverts are now run through a gender decoder to ensure language is gender neutral
- Removal of 'current salary' requirement from our application forms, in a move to offer compensation based on a role's value and individual's qualifications (rather than previous earning which can be influenced by gender biases).
- We have introduced in-person recruitment training for all hiring managers. Topics include: unconscious bias and good recruitment practice e.g. blind shortlisting.
- Hiring managers must now provide a reason for rejecting an application to be able to progress through the recruitment system to encourage robust shortlisting.
- To ensure consistency of approach, all faculty appointments are now centralised through our Faculty Recruitment and Promotion Committee.
- From Nov 2024 all final NTL assessments for Career Development Faculty will now be conducted by an appointed expert panel from the UK and abroad.
- A new People Strategy is currently under development at the heart of which are the principles and expectations of the Researcher Concordat

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. Introduction of ICR-wide appraisal window means all researchers are appraised annually by their managers. The Researcher Concordat Working Group have enhanced the guidance given to researchers and their managers on this topic, as well as monitoring the uptake of 10 day of professional development per year

- Previously monitoring of professional development days taken up was done via the annual training survey which Researcher Concordat Working Group felt didn't give a complete measure of uptake so in 2024 we incorporated it into the appraisal paperwork submission.
- We are currently procuring a Learning Management System which will allow researchers to record internal and external development activities and enable more accurate reporting and the ability to track how researchers are using their 10 days of development and share examples.
- A Researcher Concordat presentation is included at all postdoc annual conferences –including information about the next destinations of postdoc alumni
- The appraisal process is being reviewed this year with a view to making professional development the predominant focus – satisfaction with appraisals will continued to be measured via attitude survey benchmarks.

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]

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| <p>Environment and Culture (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p> | <p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review and update of the Report and Support platform is currently underway after its first 12 months in operation to respond to feedback and suggestions from users • Research Integrity session now mandatory for scientific staff to complete probation. A different panel of group leaders contributes to the session each time (between 11 and 22 group leaders per year), this means that the content of the course is iteratively enriched/updated each time with new examples and insights to reflect the different types of research being done at ICR from cancer therapeutics to clinical trials • An annual Research Integrity report is submitted annually which details enhancements brought in over the last 12 months • Group leaders must also provide details about the additional annual integrity training done within their |
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own teams as part of their annual appraisal form so that each Head of Division has a full picture of the integrity training taking place within their division.

- Having a faculty panel in each iteration of the Research Integrity training also ensures that all Faculty receive a periodic refresher on the expectations and support available.
- A suite of three additional research integrity sessions were run in the 2023/2024 academic year on key topics requests by Board of Trustees. The formats for these varied from webinars with ~80 attendees (Reproducibility and Robustness in Research and Considerations for Clinical Research Governance) to roundtable discussion/debate sessions on newer topics including the use of GTPs in research and research degrees
- The ICR introduced a new Wellbeing Coordinator role in 2020 and which is now non time-limited role to reflect growing focus on wellbeing and related activities including managing a network of volunteer Wellbeing Champions (staff from across the organisation providing wellbeing support and signposting for their peers)
- Wellbeing, Researcher Concordat, Technician Commitment and Research Integrity were all represented at the 2024 annual all-ICR conference alongside posters showcasing the scientific work of the early career researchers – copies of posters were requested by a number of group leaders

Academic Managers of Researchers

- Learning and Organisations Development are now receiving requests for bespoke research culture sessions within departments or at team away days – including developing team charters and ways of working. These materials can be adapted and shared with others

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A suite of wellbeing/mental health resources for managers have also been provided and Wellbeing coordinator looking at further enhancing the promotion and accessibility of these• There is a standing question in the staff attitude survey ask whether staff can complete their workload within contracted hours or whether they need to work additional hours regularly and if so, whether they do so willingly or feel pressured to do so – this helps us to monitor any differences across the organisation or changes over time and explore whether additional support can be offered to particular teams/promote the manager resources available• >15 faculty contributed to a collective thankyou card for the ICRs postdoc community as part of Postdoc Appreciation Week and the postdoc association plan to run this again in Sept 2024• Above and Beyond awards ran in 2024 and were an opportunity to nominate teams or individuals to recognise impactful activity – winners included successful cross disciplinary collaborations as well as staff pioneering sustainability initiatives• ‘GTPs in research’ Research Integrity roundtable workshop was developed and delivered by a member of Faculty and their wider research team, this gave early career researchers opportunity to share their knowledge of this emerging area and build their skills in training others• HR produced at-a-glance crib sheets offering support for managers on a variety of topics including giving feedback and managing absence. They were promoted widely as part of the annual appraisal round. <p>Researchers</p> |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff continue to participate in mandatory active bystander/supportive workplace training and all scientific staff also participate in research integrity. • Researchers co-develop and co-deliver annual events like the postdoc away day – suggesting topics and speakers to promote positive research culture. >80 postdoc signups for 2024 event which saw them invite: alumni, group leaders, sponsors and external facilitators • New sessions and resources developed on the topic of Narrative CVs (2 x webinars were attended by ~40 group leaders). Resources on building a narrative CV was presented at the ICR conference to support researchers in preparing funding applications • We measure awareness of Researcher Concordat in the annual training survey. In our 2023 HREiR submission had a KPI to increase awareness from 50 to 70% by 2024, which has been met with an awareness this year of 73% |
| <p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p> | <p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced parental leave policy has been approved and HR have attended postdoc association meetings to share these updates and answer questions from researchers • At-a-glance HR guidance produced for: managing probation period, giving feedback and other core manager skills. Promoted ahead of appraisals and made available to all managers • All job adverts are now run through a gender decoder to ensure language is gender neutral • New session and info sheet on ‘making the most of your appraisal’ was developed in 2024 following a request from research staff groups with >15 attending pilot workshop. This is in addition to the annual appraisal refresher training for managers. • Guidance on the Researcher Concordat and 10 days professional development is now also included in |

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| | <p>both the ICR induction checklist for new starters and in the annual appraisal training for managers.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since its launch in March 2024, 43 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 delivered to research teams 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 of interest for these sessions. <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postdoc induction sessions encourage career planning and expectation management re: time limits (currently 7 years) to postdoc contracts at the ICR, reinforcing the importance of active career planning throughout postdoc training period. • We periodically run alumni survey which have helped to establish 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) |
| <p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p> | <p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual communications (to postdoc and equivalent level researchers and their managers) ahead of the appraisal window opening, highlighting the ICR expectation that the 10 days professional development should be discussed, planned and recorded as part of appraisal process. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since June 2024 the 10 days development has been included in the induction checklist to ensure researchers and their managers are aware of this from the start of their employment, ahead of their first appraisal.• Up until summer 2023, the uptake of professional development days was measured via our annual training survey. In 2023 this showed an increase from 15% in the previous year (and equivalent to the national CEDARS benchmark in 2023) to 30% of postdoc and equivalent grades taking up the full 10 days. This year the Researcher Concordat Working Group requested that we include the ability to record training uptake to the appraisal submission process instead (via Docusign), to capture data systematically from the whole postdoctoral and equivalent level population.• The appraisal window closed on 31st May 2024 with 214 postdoc and equivalent grades providing data. This new mechanism of recording training uptake shows that 68% are taking up 10 or more days of professional development that year. This new mechanism enables a much higher number of researcher experiences to be captured and a very positive upwards trend in uptake of professional development opportunities amongst postdoc and equivalent grades. This is in part due to awareness of the Concordat and 10 days training growing amongst researchers and their managers year or year.• During the annual postdoc conference (May 2024) postdoc researchers were asked how they are using their 10 days of professional development time This word cloud was produced from 56 responses at the away day: |
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- The new Learning Management System will make it easier to systematically group and theme internal and external professional development activities being taken up but all researchers.
- The ICR postdoc alumni linked in group has continued to grow to 300 members and the benefits of engaging with the group as a source of: external mentors, information on other research organisations and inspiration for next steps were presented at the 2024 postdoc away day.

Academic Managers of Researchers

- Our annual communications to managers of researchers about the Researcher Concordat and 10 days are adapted to incorporate feedback and FAQs from previous years including: clarifying that responsibility for planning and recording the 10 days lies with researchers themselves rather than their group leader, that it can be logged in the ActivAbsence online leave booking system and training allocation is separate to (and does not impact on) annual leave entitlement. The new Learning Management System will also support our reporting on what professional development activities are being taken up
- ICR's "Developing your team" brochure is updated annually with new opportunities/submission

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| | <p>deadlines and shared with all group leaders ahead of the appraisal window– has this increased applicant numbers for internal and external development programmes e.g. Herschell and Future Leaders (ICR internal programme)</p> <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned above, since March 2024 the uptake of the number of days taken for professional development has been incorporated into appraisal submission on DocuSign. It is the researcher’s responsibility to plan, discuss and then record this on the system. • A Strengthscope team-building workshop and places on Leadership in Action were offered to all members of the Postdoc Association to acknowledge their leadership roles and the additional time and effort they put into supporting ICR’s postdoc community. |
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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. Recording training days - The Researcher Concordat working group was keen to improve the way we capture data on the uptake of the 10 days for postdoc and equivalent level grades. For 2024 we have decided to move away from capturing this as part of the annual training survey where the overall response rate was variable, and instead make it part of the DocuSign form that all researchers submit as part of the appraisals process. We are also adding information into the new starters induction checklist to avoid researchers only finding out about these expectations ahead of their first appraisal. The new Learning Management System will also enable us to collect internal and external examples of how people are using their 10 days.
2. Cross-directorate Research Culture working group – Until now the Researcher Concordat Working Group and individual directorates have been able to improve processes and communications where there have

been 'low hanging fruit' and simple fixes to implement. Larger scale changes require subject level experts across different directorates to work together to share their knowledge to find solutions to meet researcher needs. In April 2024 a Research Culture working group was formed by the Chief Academic and Research Officer to bring together expertise and knowledge from across Professional Services to refresh the guidance/support given to researchers and their managers on promoting good research culture. The working group has pooled its expertise to share examples and case studies with a view to enhancing our current resource bank, adding new examples of good practice as they emerge.

3. Strategic input – As highlighted above we are now starting to work more closely across directorates to improve information and processes which cut across several e.g. changes to tenure processes, pay and grading or offers of coaching at key transition points. This has significantly accelerated since the ICR's leadership formed a research culture working group which provides a much-needed link between Professional Service functions contribute to the delivery our ambitious research strategy though a lens of promoting a positive research culture. Senior level discussions on this topic enable more horizon scanning e.g. the future of research funding and future-proofing the research career pipeline and offering more stability for key grades.

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

- Increase the postdoc/group leader representation on the Researcher Concordat Working Group and strengthening its link to the Postdoc Association via monthly updates
- Introducing a more robust mechanism to capture professional development (10 days) to give us a better understanding of the uptake and how we can address barriers to taking up professional development

- Add expectations around the 10 days to the new starter induction checklist so that researchers and their managers are aware from the point of joining a research team
- Embed narrative CV training and resources into our annual training programme
- Continuing to capture how postdocs are using their development time and reinforcing the definition of meaningful professional development (beyond classroom training)
- Empowering postdocs to lead in promoting a good research culture, how does this look at all levels not just group leaders – e.g. formal opportunities for mentoring PhD students
- For the working group to map the outcomes we want to see and plan activities accordingly to make sure they are connected
- Continue to monitor and track alumni destinations to understand how many remain research active and/or lead research teams of their own

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 with input from all the working group and presented at Research Strategy Board for comments and approval (September meeting). The report then goes to Board of Trustees (November 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

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk