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University Executive Group

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20 October 2021

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| **Executive Summary** |
| **What is the Group expected to do?** | The Group is asked to approve the University’s inaugural progress report on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in preparation for presentation of the paper at PODCo. This is an essential reporting requirement in order to meet our obligations as signatories of the revised Concordat.  |
| **What is the purpose of this paper, and what is it about?** | In January 2021, the University of Dundee became a signatory of the [revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat/full) (hereafter simply “the revised Concordat” or “the Concordat”). As was explained in a [previous paper](https://dmail.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/OPDTeam/EecCV-oEEKJAnZlIxmj73CkBTgwQNyXAWtmTubORnIJlVg?e=9cd0gq) submitted to UEG on 1st October 2021 in support of the University becoming signatory, signing the revised Concordat carries with it specific responsibilities on the part of an institution in terms of ongoing monitoring and reporting, including a responsibility to produce an annual report before the University’s governing body outlining strategic objectives, measures of success, an implementation plan and progress on meeting objectives to date. This paper aims to fulfil those requirements.  |
| **Author:** | Dr Gilbert Ramsay, Dr Lisa Anderson  |
| **How has the paper reached its current form?** | On September 23rd 2021, The University submitted required documentation in support of its 10 year review for the [HR Excellence in Research Award.](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/hr/hrexcellenceinresearch/) This consists of an action plan and a progress report, which represents the starting point for this paper. Due to alignment between the reporting requirements for the revised Concordat and the HR Excellence in Research Award, the action plans for these two accreditations have now been merged. Development of the Concordat/HR Excellence in Research action plan has been overseen by Career Development for Research Staff Steering Group (CDRS) and led by the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG), a cross University working group with a mandate to oversee the implementation and review of the revised Concordat and further to design and deliver the actions set out in the Research Culture Strategy and Research Culture Action Plan.  |
| **Has the item been considered by the Group previously?** | In October 2020, UEG considered a paper setting out the case for the University to become signatory to the Concordat. This paper follows from that previous item.  |
| **Where will the paper go next and how will the effects of this paper be communicated?** | If approved, this paper will subsequently be presented at PODCo on with the intention of presenting it before the University Court in November. After this it will be published on the University website, together with the University’s Concordat action plan in fulfilment of the University’s obligations within the first year of becoming a signatory or the revised RDC.  |
| **What governance instruments or policies are applicable to or affected by the paper?** | Presentation of this paper is integral to the fulfilment of commitments the University has already made in deciding to become signatory to the revised Concordat and is therefore integrally bound up in the governance requirements associated with the Concordat itself. This in turn links to the University’s [Researcher Development Policy](../../Researcher%20development%20policy%20%3A%20Research%20%3A%20University%20of%20Dundee) which explicitly makes a “strategic and operational institutional commitment to support the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers”.   |
| **How does the paper relate to the** [University Strategy & Values](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/strategy/) **and how does it align to the University**[Risk Appetite Statement](https://uod.box.com/v/riskappetite) **approved by the Court?** | In the October submission to UEG concerning the decision to become signatory to the RDC, it was noted that the RDC is fully aligned with the University Strategy and Values. The RDC is fundamentally about the University valuing people (specifically researchers) and building a joined up (i.e. ”One Dundee”) approach towards creating a research culture in which they can thrive and produce world leading research, while attracting the leading researchers of the future. Additionally, remaining signatory to the RDC has become a mandatory for institutions which are in receipt of UKRI funding, and is heavily backed by other major funders of research, which were among the first signatories of the Concordat. Failure to live up to the obligations entailed in signing the RDC therefore potentially places the University’s strategic aspiration to change the world through research at considerable risk.  |

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| **Can the paper be included in open business?** |[x]   |
| **If applicable has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?** |[ ]  Click or tap here to enter text. |

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**Researcher Development Concordat: Progress Report 2021**

11 August 2021

**Introduction**

The following report sets out the strategic objectives behind the University of Dundee’s [Revised Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers Action Plan,](https://dmail.sharepoint.com/%3Ax%3A/s/CDRS/ETttWB9a9L9PkXUDCHgHSEcBl2MnLGO78bsgITGaaNJ8rw?e=XZjYnC) which covers relevant actions that will be undertaken in line with the four Principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers for the period between 2021 and 2023. It also overviews the key success measures associated with these measures, the plan for implementing these, and progress to date on accomplishing them.

**Strategic Objectives**

The Concordat is a multi-stakeholder agreement aimed at improving support for researchers and their careers. Originally published in 2008, the Concordat was revised in 2019 on the recommendation of an independent review by Professor David Bogle commissioned by the multi-stakeholder Concordat Strategy Group.

A key difference between the old and revised Concordats is the strength of the language used. The revised Concordat expresses itself in the modality of obligation, setting out a series of specific things which those it addresses must do. These obligations concern four key audiences: funders, institutions, managers of researchers and researchers themselves, and encompass three key Principles: Environment and Culture, Employment, and Professional and Career Development.

The current strategic objectives that underpin the University of Dundee’s inaugural Concordat implementation plan have been developed through a process of consultation and research that began with the commissioning of a [gap analysis](https://dmail.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/CDRS/EZqjaUzR6N1Nrwlu2p0ri08BgkggQI6wNO9Lg0PF93ft3Q?e=1P7xJh) by OPD which reported in February 2020. The process of developing the action plan has continued since then through ongoing work by the Career Development for Research Staff Steering Group (CDRS), the Concordat Implementation Group and the multiple units represented on these committees.

The headline finding of the gap analysis was that the University is currently fulfilling most of its Concordat obligations at least to a satisfactory level – although there is room for improvement in many areas. One area was found where the University is not currently performing well enough. This is the obligation for managers of researchers to “allocate a minimum of 10 days pro rata, per year, for their researchers to engage with professional development, supporting researchers to balance the delivery of their research and their own professional development”.

The gap analysis also noted the possibility of improving the University’s offering in multiple areas set out in the Concordat, usually by targeting existing resources and procedures, including areas such as probation policy and research staff induction.

Following from this, the key strategic objectives of the University’s current plan can be summarised as follows:

* Ensuring that managers of researchers are properly equipped to support the career development of those they manage by gathering better data on training attendance and training needs for individuals in this category, and producing new information resources for them
* Ensuring that researchers are better aware of opportunities and responsibilities in relation to career development by means of actions focused on induction, probation and appraisal.
* In general, to focus as far as possible on making better use of existing resources and tools rather than inventing new ones from scratch.

**Implementation plan**

A detailed forward-looking action plan covering the period 2021-2023 was submitted by the University on 23rd September 2021 as part of its ten-year review of its HR Excellence in Research Award. The template for this action plan is organised in terms of the Principles and audiences of the revised Concordat. In order to maintain consistency in relation to these two reporting requirements, this action plan also constitutes our action plan for the Concordat.

Implementation of the actions set out in the Concordat action plan will be coordinated by CDRS and the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG), which bring together representatives of the researcher community with key professional services units.

The essence of the plan can be represented as follows (specific actions are illustrative rather than exhaustive):



As the diagram above illustrates, our assumption is that institutional level actions cascade down either directly or via managers to create a situation in which researchers are informed and empowered to take control of their own career development.

**Measures of success**

The Concordat action plan has been informed by a wide variety of data, both quantitative and qualitative which provides baselines for our actions going forwards. The University Staff Survey of 2019 included a number of CROS-type questions aimed at research staff. In 2021, the University for the first time ran CEDARS, a new UK wide researcher survey originally piloted in 2020. In addition to this, training attendance data and workshop feedback was used to better understand the training needs and preferences of researchers. Qualitatively, researchers at Dundee had the opportunity to continually feed into and co-create the action plan via committees and networks such as CDRS, the Research Staff Forum and the Research Staff Associations in the School of Life Sciences and the School of Medicine.

These data have allowed us to create robust baselines and consequent success measures for many of our actions. Examples of success measures for specific actions include:

* To achieve 90% uptake of online EDI training by managers of researchers and 80% uptake of research integrity training by supervisors by 2023
* Increase attendance at training on OPD programme relevant to management skills, including tripling attendance at HR for Managers and at OSaR training by 50%
* Aim for 5 research staff to attend Advance HE research team leadership training
* Create researcher specific content in online Manager’s Resource and a new Statement of Expectation for researchers and managers of researchers
* To raise the number of researchers claiming “some understanding” of the Researcher Development Concordat from by five percentage points
* Increase OSaR completion rates among researchers by five percentage points
* Create a new probation policy which improves researchers’ understanding of the impact of their roles and the performance expectations placed upon them – to be assessed qualitatively in conversation with researcher representatives in relevant forums
* Increase reported satisfaction with appraisals by 4% (61% reported in survey responses to 65%)
* Increase self-reported engagement with careers advisors by 2% (28% reported in survey responses to 30%)

**Progress to date**

The University of Dundee has made considerable progress in meeting the objectives set in its previous HR Excellence in Research action plan, covering the period from 2019-2021. This places us in a strong position to meet our objectives in relation to the Concordat action plan being put forward alongside this report. Further information on this can be found in the current HR Excellence in Research [ten-year review report](https://dmail.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/CDRS/EeCi33ewf4FMl0V9utMOn8MB5V8Al1aG5BrAnX5TAE_LDA?e=ip32ML) and [backward facing action](https://dmail.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/s/CDRS/ERbkzq2-rq9DnG_eg8Iwyb0BqW-203Rz0Rf-VvBOAqCa9A?e=53H6U1) plan. With regard to the current [Concordat action plan](https://dmail.sharepoint.com/%3Ax%3A/s/CDRS/ETttWB9a9L9PkXUDCHgHSEcBl2MnLGO78bsgITGaaNJ8rw?e=XZjYnC), initial deliverables are expected from late November/December 2021.