

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: Annual Report 2021-22

Background

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, also known as the Researcher Development Concordat (RDC), dates back to 1996 when an agreement was made between UK Universities and research funders to create a framework to support career management of staff on research-only contracts. The RDC was revised in 2008 and more recently in 2019 following an independent review. A new requirement of the revised 2019 RDC is that institutions are no longer automatically signatories, but needed to formally signal their commitment to uphold and promote the principles and discharge their duties as signatories. Further, signatories are required to produce an initial gap analysis, an annual report and an action plan.

In 2005 the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers was launched by the Commission which shared many similarities with the UK's RDC. The HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) is a formal accreditation that institutions have applied the principles of the Charter and provide good working conditions for researchers. HREiR is subject to biennial review and re-accreditation, involving a

The University of Wolverhampton (UoW) held the HREiR award from 2012 to 2021. We became signatories to the RDC in June 2020. In July 2021, we were unsuccessful in our re-accreditation to HREiR, in large parts due to issues with reporting progress against an action plan from 2016 as the substantive review had been delayed. Our 2021 submission to HREiR meets the requirements for the annual reporting under the RDC and is published on a dedicated page on the UoW website <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/researcher-development/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers/>. This is the report for the academic year 2021-22.

The Researcher Development Concordat: Strategic objectives

The RDC focuses on 3 core Principles:

Environment and culture

Excellent research requires a supportive and inclusive research culture

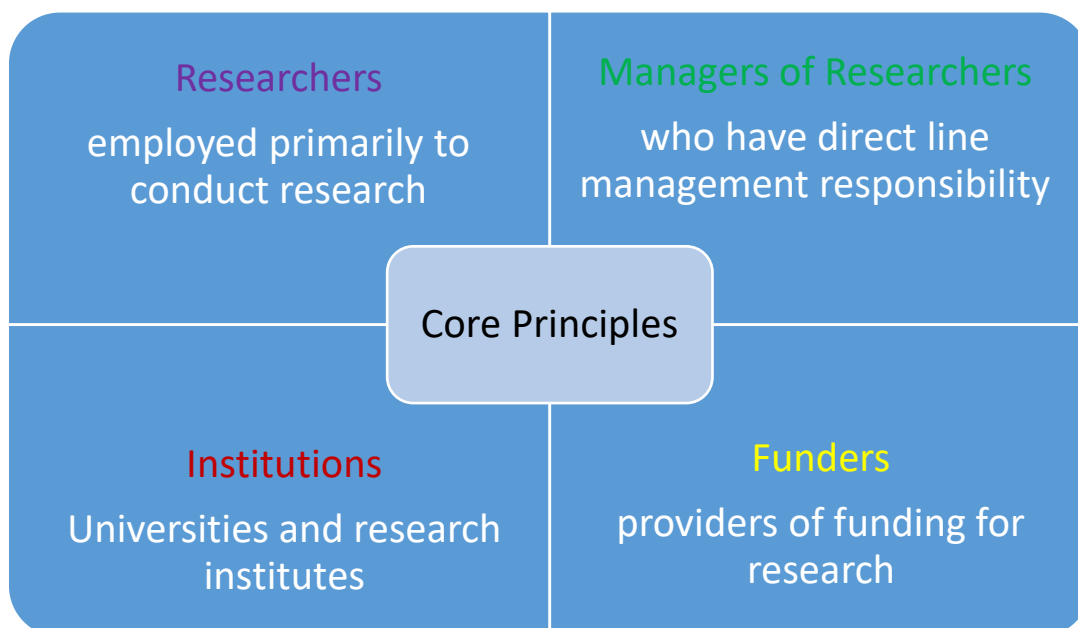
Employment

Researchers are recruited, employed and managed under conditions that recognise and value their contributions

Professional and career development

Professional and career development are integral to enabling researchers to develop their full potential

The RDC identifies 4 stakeholder groups and for each one outlines specific responsibilities and obligations under the three principles.



On becoming a signatory, the University of Wolverhampton also committed to the following strategic objectives:

Objective 1: Raise the visibility of the Concordat and champion its Principles within our organisation at all levels.

We have presented updates on the RDC to the Corporate Management Board (CMB) and University Research Committee. We raised the visibility of the RDC through communications in Research Matters, our internal research newsletter. Finally, we have included reference to the RDC in our internal grant scheme for early career researchers – the Lord Paul Fellowship scheme. However, our gap analysis showed that awareness of the RDC is relatively low across the organisation, and will be included in the action plan for 2022-23.

Objective 2: Identify a senior manager champion and associated group with relevant representation from across the organisation with responsibility for annual review and reporting on progress.

The Dean of Research, who heads the Research Policy Unit, is the senior academic lead championing the RDC and the Associate Director Organisational Development, deputy director of HR, is the senior professional service lead.

Objective 3: Ensure researchers are formally represented in developing and monitoring organisational efforts to implement the Concordat Principles.

The Researcher Development Concordat Sub-committee (RDCSC) has formal responsibility for developing and monitoring the implementation of the RDC at the University of Wolverhampton. The RDCSC is a formal sub-committee of the University Research Committee and includes representation of researchers from all subject areas, different contracts and different career stages. In line with our organisational EDI objectives to have governance committees representative of our student and staff populations, the RDCSC has 53%

female members (university staff 60%), 27% are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (university staff 25%) and 13% declared a disability (university staff 6%).

Objective 4: Undertake a gap analysis to compare our policies and practices against the Concordat Principles.

Drawing on a range of sources including internal and external survey, documents and focus groups, we have completed a gap analysis. This shows good progress against some areas of the RDC (EDI, research integrity) and the need for further work on others. Areas of concern include bullying and harassment and mental health & wellbeing.

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

Our action plan is published on the University website <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/researcher-development/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers/>

Objective 6: Set up processes for systematically and regularly gathering the views of researchers we employ, to inform and improve the organisation's approach to and progress on implementing the Concordat.

We have used the biennial CROS/PIRLS and their replacement CEDARS to systematically gather the view of researchers, and managers of researchers to inform and improve our implementation of the RDC. Since 2021, we included researcher-related identifiers (research-only staff, staff with significant responsibility for research) in internal staff surveys. This has allowed us to identify, for example, differences in employee engagement between different staff groups, which in turn feeds into our action plan.

Objective 7: Produce an annual report to our governing body

This is the 2021-22 annual report

Progress review

We will be using the insights from the gap analysis to update our HREiR action plan, which also details the progress we have made to date. Particular achievements to date include:

1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Race Equality Charter Bronze accreditation achieved, That's Me! Project awarded and launched, committee composition reviewed, reverse mentoring programme commenced
2. Research integrity: signatory to DORA, updated and extended guidance on research ethics and research integrity, research integrity session incorporated into Essentials of the Classroom,
3. Mental health and wellbeing strategy launched
4. CARE framework launched and work on organisational culture

Silke Machold, DoR 29 April 2022.