



**University of
Nottingham**
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Researcher Development Concordat

University of Nottingham (UK) implementation summary report, January 2024 (12-year implementation review)

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I. Institutional context to the current report

This report reviews the University's progress made in the 2022-2024 period on the implementation of the Concordat's Principles and includes our strategy for the next three years. The University became a signatory to the new and revised 2019 'Researcher Development Concordat' in January 2021 and all outstanding actions identified from the previous action plans were transitioned and reported against the 2019 Concordat in the Action Plan 2022-2024.

Following extensive consultation with the university community, and launched in August 2022, the university's Research Strategic Delivery Plan 2022-27 sets out the ambitions for our research-intensive university. A key priority in the strategy is the people, culture and ambition theme seeking 'to develop a research environment and culture that is inclusive, supportive and enables high quality and high performing research' (Research SDP Theme 1). Key activities within this theme include the launch of the Researcher Academy and the Research Culture project 'Connected Cultures' with initiatives that champion the use of best practices established through local trials and has an Advisory and Advocacy Group to steer the overarching change project. A working group meet regularly to ensure alignment between the Researcher Development Concordat, Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter and Research Culture initiatives.

The input and feedback of our community across all job families is actively sought through feedback to maintain and improve supportive measures is constantly sought from the research and research-support community, including running two university-wide (Research Culture Survey 2022 and People Culture Survey 2023), and an annual research culture conference.

During the reporting period, the University has experienced changes in the senior leadership with the appointment of a new Deputy-Vice Chancellor, Professor Jane Norman and following the departure of PVC-RKE Dame Jessica Corner, the tenure of two interim PVC-RKE in 2022 and 2023. The new PVC for RKE, Professor Tom Rodden, commenced his role October 2023.

II. How an internal evaluation was undertaken

The review and evaluation of the University of Nottingham's Concordat Action Plan (2022-2024) was conducted by the Head of Researcher Development with input from academic schools and professional services on behalf of the Concordat Steering Group and Research Staff Committee (RSC), on behalf of the University's Research Committee.

Researchers' views have informed this review through input from the research staff representatives on the RSG (who represent both school and faculty Research Staff networks), Researcher Academy Faculty Leads (RAFLs), faculty-level Research Staff Steering Groups/Committees and through the 2021 Athena SWAN survey and 2022 Research Culture Survey and it is anticipated that the 2023 People Survey results will feed into future reporting and will be augmented through pulse Research Culture surveys. In addition, feedback has been gathered on a more ad hoc basis from various training interventions and events held throughout the reporting period.

Each of the five faculties has developed and implemented a faculty Researcher Development Concordat action plan, which have been drafted and written through consultations with representatives from the researcher community, academics and faculty professional services staff and led by the Researcher Academy Faculty Leads. Action plans have been approved by faculty research boards and faculty senior leaders. The faculty-specific and institutional action plan have reciprocal planning, reporting and monitoring to ensure best practice sharing across the institution.

III. Governance Structures

The Concordat Steering Group (CSG) and Research Staff Committee (RSC) are sub-committees of the Researcher Academy's Committee and report into the University's Research Committee, chaired by the PVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange, which is a committee of Senate. The

RSC is chaired by a Senior Research Fellow, Dr Alan Chamberlain and the CSG by a Researcher Academy Faculty Lead, Dr Alexander Tarr. Both report through the activities of the Associate-PVC for the Researcher Academy and Researcher Career Development and Director of Director of RKE Excellence and Strategy to Research Committee. The RSC and CSG have clearly defined terms of reference and memberships and are inclusive of research-focussed staff representatives. The RSC membership includes one early career stage and one senior research staff member per Faculty, academic (Researcher Academy Faculty Leads, RAFL) and professional service colleagues from Careers and Employability Service, the Researcher Academy, Human Resources and internal marketing specialists from External Relations.

IV. Key Achievements and Progress (2019 Concordat principles)

The following section outlines the key achievements and progress against the Concordat obligations and actions identified in the review of the University of Nottingham's Concordat Action Plan 2022-2024. The following are significant advancements, which bolsters our current provision of support, policies, training and development initiatives that benefit and assist our researcher community.

Principle: Environment and Culture

Awareness and engagement: A key objective throughout 2022-24 was to raise awareness of the Concordat and its Principles and Obligations amongst key stakeholders including researchers and line managers of researchers and leadership teams within schools and faculties. This has taken place via several routes, including at each faculty level through the RAFLs and at the school-level through Researcher Champion-led talks and at an institutional level through Researcher Academy events and at the annual Research Culture Conference. In addition, the Concordat features in the monthly institutional e-newsletters, and a centralised Researcher Academy SharePoint page dedicated to the Concordat has been created. (EC1 and PCD8, AP 22-24)

The creation of the role of school-based Research Staff Champions, who advocate for research-focussed staff within their schools has been successfully rolled out to all schools who employ more than five research staff. The role has a defined profile with workload allocation and clearly defined processes for recruitment to ensure continuity. To date, the schools that meet this threshold, all have processes in place and individuals in post. RAFLs convene regular quarterly meetings of the Champions in 4 out of 5 Faculties, the 5th Faculty with <30 researchers has a Research Staff Steering Committee of researchers. Key faculty initiatives driven by these roles include:

- Science (FoS) – Creation of a Career Enrichment framework for researchers. A networking event in July 2022 attended by 65 researchers with presentations on the Concordat.
- Engineering (FoE)- supporting the development of the Faculty Action Plan through Engineering Research Futures and Steering Group activities. Launched at an event attended by 60 research-focussed staff and line managers in summer of 2023.
- Social Sciences (FoSS)- The group coordinated a response and action plan directly informed from the research staff representative-led survey and formed a follow-up focus group to monitor progress in 2022.
- Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS)- A Faculty-wide research culture networking event for researchers in July 2023, including a focus on key obligations and actions in the Faculty Concordat action plan, and an opportunity for researchers to provide feedback on Faculty support for research staff.
- Arts (FoA)-Coordinated a joint with FoSS Research Culture event over two days in the summer of 2023. Successful drive for mentoring allowance to be included in 'citizenship' of workload model for academics.

Wellbeing and mental health: A gap analysis of the wellbeing provision was completed in 2022, identifying overall good provision. However, just over half (51%) of research-focused staff respondents to the Research Culture 2023 survey agreed that their mental health was being supported. Current provisions available to all staff have further been supported by additional initiatives specially aimed at research-focused staff including a well-being steering group by the Researcher Academy focusing on research-focussed staff to improve better sign-posting and communicate provisions available and augments the development of a dedicated well-being page for researchers hosted on the Researcher Academy SharePoint.

Equality, diversity and inclusion: The University holds a gold Athena SWAN award (awarded November 2023), and a Race Equality Charter bronze award, with implementation action plans for both awards actively driving initiatives. In the 2022 Research Culture survey, 70% of research-focus staff respondents agreed that leadership where they worked actively supported race equality, whereas only 47% agreed that disability equality was supported. Examples of initiatives launched in 2022/23,

- The launch of a toolkit for disabled staff, which includes an introduction, mandatory training on equality and inclusion, case studies, and guidance on how to make reasonable adjustments.
- Science Faculty held an all-staff neurodiversity awareness session in 2023, which was attended by 283 participants, inclusive of researchers and their line managers.

Professional conduct and research integrity: The University of Nottingham's code of professional conduct and research integrity ethics was updated to note that 'all new research students and staff are expected to undertake training in Research Integrity and Ethics'. In the 2022 Research Culture survey, of the research-focussed staff respondents, 90% agreed that they understood what was expected of them in their research-related role.

- Research Integrity Week 2023 saw an increase in the number of registrants to 990. On-demand Research Integrity training was attended by 895 researchers in 2022/23.
- Over 600 researchers attended briefings on the new UKRI Open Access Policy and the new initiative 'The Summer of Data' was launched in 2022 supporting researchers with research data management plans. The Research Data Management service has had a 25% increase in requests for support by researchers in 2022.

Research Culture: The annual Research Culture conference following the inaugural conference in 2022 is now a permanent fixture in the University research diary. The conference brings together researchers, academics and research-support staff in a safe space to discuss, challenge and celebrate the good research culture at Nottingham. In 2022, of the 257 registrants, 19% were research-focused staff and 23% were line managers of researchers, with the remaining attendees comprising doctoral students and technical/ professional service colleagues. In 2023, 17% of registrations were research-focused staff but saw a rise in the engagement of line managers to 29%. In 2022, the programme included roundtable discussions in which attendees were asked to co-create a response to their faculty on the issues raised in the Research Culture survey. These co-created responses were fed into faculty action plans and ongoing Research Culture discussions at the institutional and faculty level. The 2023 programme included thematic roundtable discussions one of which was led and focussed on initiatives for research-focussed staff.

Principle: Employment

Recruitment and Induction

The Faculty of Science initiative to increase diversity on recruitment panels. Training session specifically for research-focussed staff on interview panel training to increase the representation of this job family within the Faculty-wide interview pool whilst also supporting people who are looking

for the opportunity to develop their experience and skills as interviewers. 19 Faculty of Science research-focused staff attended and are now panel-trained.

A scoping project was undertaken to assess the local school-level inductions for research staff across the university. Areas of good and bad practice were identified and fed to RAFLs for corrective action if required. This augments the current provision of HR's new starter induction materials (SharePoint) and the research-focused staff induction delivered by the Researcher Academy and Careers Employability Service (online and in-person format to ensure accessibility). In 2022, 46 new starters attended this induction. (Action E1, AP22-24).

Recognition, reward and promotion: Survey data (Athena SWAN survey 2021) shows that completion and satisfaction response rates to questions about the Annual Development Conversations (ADC) still remain high with 80% of research-only staff respondents indicating they have undertaken an ADC in the last 12 months (11% indicating they have not been in post for 12 months and not had an ADC). This is further supported by the completion rates for the 21/22 ADC cycle which show that 80% of research-focussed staff completed their ADC, raising to a completion rate of 93% for R&T staff ('line managers').

People Management: Of the Athena SWAN 2021 survey respondents who identified as research-only staff, 70% indicated that they strongly agreed/agreed that they had useful discussions about their career progression and career aspirations during their ADC. Similarly in the 2022 Research Culture survey, 72% of research staff respondents agreed that the ADC meetings supported their career development. To enhance the effectiveness of ADCs for research-focussed staff several faculty pilots of best practices have been explored

- FoS launched in Autumn 2022 a new balanced framework for researchers, which was circulated to managers and researchers. To be evaluated following the pilot year in 2024.
- FoE Concordat action plan includes actions addressing ADC, such as requiring cpd to be a prominent feature in the conversation, and researchers having an active role in the appointment of their appraiser. (E13, AP 22-24)

Job Security: Accessing the redeployment processes and pool by research-focussed staff still remains low by comparison to other staff groups. A webinar for researchers was delivered in February 2023 on the redeployment processes and how to promote your skillset with 33 participants attending. The recording remains available for asynchronous viewing. (Action E8, AP 22-24)

Principle: Professional and Career Development

Championing professional development: Faculty projects underway to collate information on what a minimum of '10 days of CPD' may look like for researchers in their faculty. Led by the RAFLs with input from Research Staff Champions, Research Staff reps and in consultation with researchers. Examples of projects and initiatives,

- In FoS, A 2-page guide to career enrichment and a guide to '10 days of cpd' has been produced through collaboration between RAFL, Research Reps, and Research Staff Champions. In 22/23, £11k of funding was allocated to researchers to support their cpd activities. (PCD2, AP 22-24)
- FoSS, to support the recording of 10 days of cpd a template has been developed by the RAFL and circulated by Research Staff Champions within schools. (PCD2, AP 22-24)
- In FMHS, an online 'Researcher Recognition Record' has been developed to allow researchers to collect information on CPD training. This is being piloted in the School of Life Sciences.

Research Identity and Leadership: The successful relaunch of the revised Research Leadership Programmes took place in 2022. The Nottingham Research Leaders Programme 2022 had twenty academic colleagues from across all five faculties successfully completing the programme in 2022 and fourteen colleagues in 2023 representing all faculties. Similarly, the 2022 pilot of the ECR

Leadership Programme successfully completed with a cohort of twenty research-focussed staff from 4 of the 5 faculties (open to all) and was rerun in 2023 with another 20 researchers completing. The programme comprised workshop settings and group coaching, with an additional workshop in 2023 focussed on EDI in Research training. (Action PCD4, AP22-24).

150 researchers (from all faculties) attended the 'Researcher Profiles: managing your online identity' training, which is augmented by online resources on research metrics for self-study available on the library webpages.

Diverse Careers: Following the appointment of a dedicated training and development manager in Knowledge Exchange, a new series of training programmes on Knowledge Exchange and Innovation was launched in the 22/23 academic year. This is supported by a Knowledge Exchange SharePoint providing signposting and access to recordings of events and training and a dedicated page on EDI in Knowledge Exchange. (Action PCD5, AP 22-24)

V. Next steps and strategy for 2024-27 onwards

The Concordat implementation action plan for 2024-27 (AP 24-27) builds on our previous Concordat implementation progress and continues to focus on creating a research environment and culture in which research staff and their managers are supported and contributions appropriately recognised. These 28 actions will enable us to achieve the following objectives over the next 3 years,

Objective 1: Championing researchers within an equitable research culture. Research-focussed staff are **championed** across the University to support the development of an inclusive and supportive research culture through consideration of research-focussed staff as key stakeholders at the University. To develop a framework for this vision for Research Culture, which will include prioritisation and allocation of resources appropriately.

Success indicator: Create an inclusive and diverse research environment with clear expectations for research culture, individual performance and support systems through the creation of a framework of an institutional research culture and environment vision by 2026. (ResearchSDP22-27, Theme 1)

Objective 2: UniCore system rollout with embedding of improved processes. A single online system for recruitment, induction, mandatory training completion, storing and monitoring ADCs, training portfolios and exit surveys to be rolled out across the institution and all job families.

Success Indicator: Roll out of the online system, UniCore as per project timelines.

Success indicator: All research-focussed staff to have a training portfolio that facilitates reporting on professional development supporting good ADC. To see an increase in satisfaction in survey responses on the usefulness of ADCs for professional and career development.

Success indicator: Increased completion rates of exit surveys with processes in place to ensure outputs inform training provision and relevant review of relevant processes and practices.

Objective 3: Implementation of the REC-HURDLES project that aims to revisit employment contracts and help under-represented researcher groups to Develop, Lead and Excel. This £~1M grant (funder: Wellcome Trust) is led by our Vice Chancellor with a team of co-Investigators comprising researchers, professional service, technical and academic colleagues.

Success Indicator: Achieving the aims, objectives and implementing the workstream activities of the project within the designated time frames. (People and Culture SDP and Research Culture SDP: Theme 1)

Objective 4: The University as a Learning Organisation To ensure that research-focussed staff and line managers of researchers are included as key stakeholders and beneficiaries in the implementation of the University as a Learning Organisation.

Success Indicator: Changes to cultural perceptions of prioritisation of professional development. Researchers have a training portfolio and the collection of training and development links to ADC. (People and Culture SDP and Research Culture SDP: Theme 1)