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The Concordat
to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

University of Nottingham UK Implementation summary report (Ten year review)

January 2022

I. Review and evaluation

The review and evaluation of the University of Nottingham's Concordat Action Plan (2019-2021) was conducted by the Research Staff Group (RSG), on behalf of the University's Research Committee. The RSG is chaired by a Researcher Academy Faculty Lead (for the current reporting period this is Professor Dov Stekel) and reports through the activities of the Associate-PVC for the Researcher Academy and Researcher Career Development to Research Committee. The RSG comprises research staff representatives (one early career stage and one senior research staff member per Faculty), and representatives of the Careers and Employability Service, the Researcher Academy, Researcher Academy Faculty Leads (RAFLs) for each Faculty, Human Resources and internal marketing specialists. The group has also received input from academic schools and professional services, which has fed into this evaluation.

Researchers' views have been taken into account during this review through input from the research staff representatives on the RSG (who represent both school and faculty Research Staff networks), RAFLs, faculty-level Research Staff Steering Groups/Committees, a Task and Finish Group comprising members who represents the breadth of disciplines and research-career stages and colleagues who work with and support researchers and research at Nottingham. It also includes feedback gathered from various training interventions and events held throughout the reporting period. Unfortunately, the data and analysis for the Athena SWAN survey undertaken during 2021 was not available to feed into this report at the time of writing.

II. Institutional context to the current report

This report reviews the University's progress made in the 2019-2021 period on the implementation of the Concordat's Principles and includes our strategy for the next four years. The original 2019-21 action plan, researched and prepared in the latter months of 2019 was written against the 2008 Concordat and successfully led to the renewal of our HR Excellence in Research Award following external peer review process (8-year renewal). 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 plan were transitioned and are now reported against the 2019 Researcher Development Concordat (Action Plan 2019-21).

Throughout 2021, an extensive Gap Analysis exercise has been undertaken to explore the institutional readiness for the 2019 Researcher Development Concordat. This was used as the basis to inform the Concordat Task and Finish group, sponsored by the A-PVC Researcher Academy and Research Careers, on behalf of the Research Staff Group. The Task and Finish Group's function was to develop the 2022-2024 institutional implementation action plan and future 4-year strategy.

III. 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 2019-2021. 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

The Researcher Academy launched in September 2020 strives to promote a healthy research culture, to cultivate researcher excellence, and develop creative partnerships that enable researchers to flourish. Key developments since launch include,

- A Members area for all researchers on SharePoint, including specific areas for research-only staff, supervisors of researchers, doctoral students and colleagues for support researchers.
- Working with faculties on researcher activities via the appointment of [Researcher Academy Faculty Leads \(RAFLs\)](#) and successful pilot of school appointed 'Research-staff Champions' in the Faculty of Social Sciences. This will now be rolled out in other faculties.
- Research Staff Group refresh and launch in 2021 with new Terms of Reference and membership.

Professional Conduct and Research Integrity: Revision and publication of the university's [Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics](#) (November 2021). An inaugural 'Research Integrity Week' (June 2021) included a series of events on Research Integrity and the launch of a new [Research Integrity SharePoint site](#), which features the 'Research Integrity Bytes', short one-page leaflets addressing common issues raised by researchers on Research Integrity and professional conduct. In May 2021, Nottingham launched the [Report and Support](#) platform that enables anonymous reporting of incidents of bullying and harassment at the university.

A Supportive research environment: The University's [Wellbeing Delivery Plan](#), published in 2020, is a strand of the People Strategic Delivery Plan and includes a range of interventions and resources supporting the wellbeing of all staff and students identified across five core thematic areas. Key outputs from the Wellbeing delivery plan include,

- A network of [Dignity Advisers](#), providing impartial and confidential advice to support staff and students who have issues and concerns regarding harassment, bullying or victimisation. Currently there is a network of 30 Dignity Advisers across the University.
- [Togetherall](#), launched at Nottingham for staff and students in November 2020, is a global digital mental health service. As of September 2021, there are 334 staff registrations. All research-only staff have received publicity regarding the service through a variety of routes.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion initiatives: The University was successful in its application for bronze status for the Race Equality Charter (2021) and continues to implement the action plan for the institutional Athena SWAN award. As part of the EDI Strategic Delivery Plan the University has delivered a high number of EDI initiatives. Examples of key initiatives include,

- ['Let's Be Clear about EDI' campaign](#), launched in September 2020, provides guidance for managers to tackle EDI themes as a regular part of their team meetings. In parallel, 11 webinars were also launched in collaboration with staff networks, covering a wide range of EDI themes.
- Launch of the ['Toolkit for Managers Supporting Disabled Staff'](#) and reasonable adjustments policy.
- Launch of EDI SharePoint site (late 2021) bringing together EDI resources into one location.

Principle: Employment

Recruitment Guide: Development of a new [guide to recruitment](#) (internal view only), which promotes best practice to ensure an open, transparent and merit-based process. Launch of the [Building a Culture for Success](#), a guide on the University's expectations and behaviours for success. Additional resources have been created to support managers in recruitment and line managing during Covid-19 pandemic.

Inductions: Launch of the new ['Welcome to the University of Nottingham' SharePoint site](#) and [New Staff Induction SWAY](#) (internal view only). This resource, included when a new employment contract is issued, contains relevant resources and signposting to policies and guidance. The Researcher Academy and Careers Employability Service 'New Research Staff' induction seminar was relaunched with both in-person and online sessions to provide greater flexibility to the researchers.

Appraisal and Development Conversations: Completion of the University's 'Appraisal and Development Conversations' process continues to remain good amongst research-only staff (average of >85% completion in 2021/22 and 2021/22). To support researchers and their managers to maximise the benefits of the ADC, seminars for both appraisers and appraisees are available.

Principle: Professional and Career Development

Supervisor Seminar Series ([SharePoint](#) internal view only) is open to research-only and academic staff covers a range of topical supervision issues with guest speakers sharing their experience and best practice. Throughout 2020/21 academic year 26% of attendees at the 11 webinars were research-only staff.

Leadership and Management Academy There has been considerable investment in resources available through the [LMA portal](#) (internal view only) throughout 2020-21 covering a diverse range

of topics open to all staff, including a library of 24 themed topics covering project management, Leaders Toolkit and hybrid working.

Pilot of ADAPT Together webinar series for research staff (June-July 2021) focusing on supporting research staff at early stages of their research careers. The series platforms different perspectives and strategies for dealing with the hurdles experienced when building a research career, including topics on professional resilience, Personal Research Vision.

IV. Next steps and strategy for 2022-26 onwards

The Concordat implementation action plan for 2022-24 (AP 22-24) outlines 40 actions focused on creating a research environment and culture in which research staff and those that manage them are supported and recognised. The actions were identified by the Concordat Task and Finish Group and proposed to the agreement of the Research Staff Group in November 2021. These actions sit within a broader strategy for the next 4 years that includes,

- The identification and implementation of a **university-wide process for reporting and monitoring** the 'minimum of 10 days of CPD for research-only staff'. Currently a single system does not exist that would enable the breadth of activities to be recorded and viewable by researchers, their managers and the university administration.
Success indicator: A single system for use by researchers, managers of researchers to record training and development activities, and which is accessible by Faculty and Professional Service colleagues for monitoring and reporting.
- Improvement in **communication pathways** for researchers and their managers for the sharing of policies, practices and initiatives across the University. To better utilise the existing channels for raising concerns by researchers to the faculty/university. To create a well-defined Research-only Staff communication plan, which includes a communication campaign on the obligations of the Concordat for researchers, research leaders, managers and the University.
Success indicator: Researchers, managers of researchers and Professional Service staff report an increased awareness of the Concordat and university policies relevant to the staff group.
- To develop a comprehensive **evaluation process** that will enable the capture of a richness of data both quantitative and qualitative on the measurable impact of the Concordat. To include use surveys (internal/external sector), focus groups, Town Halls and other identified mechanisms for capturing engagement and impact information. These evaluation mechanisms will also benefit reporting and for other initiatives such as Athena SWAN, REC and Technician's Commitment.
Success indicator: Implementation of a process that enables the gathering and analysing of information on research-only staff engagement, which will inform the Concordat and other EDI reporting mechanisms and improve current provision.
- To ensure that research-only staff matters are **championed** across the University to support the development of an inclusive and supportive research culture through consideration of research-only staff as key stakeholders at the University.
Success indicator: Create an inclusive and diverse research environment, and set clear expectations for research culture, individual performance and support systems (Research SDP, 22-27, Theme 1).
- Work with the funders, other universities and national bodies (i.e. Russell Group, Vitae, R14) to **advocate** for research-only staff and to engage in discussions with the sector on the impact of how research is funded on the research environment and research career/researcher job security.
Success indicator: To lead conversations that enables a more equitable, transparent, inclusive and supportive research culture in the UK, particularly with reference to researcher job security.
- The Concordat action plan remains a **dynamic** document with a regular process for updating or inclusion of actions on new policy and practices, especially those arising from the refresh of the institutional Research Strategy (due to be finalised late 21/early 22).
Success indicator: A Concordat implementation action plan that is regularly updated and reflects current policy, strategy and practices in a timely manner.

V. Abbreviations

ADC	Appraisal and Development Conversation (annual staff appraisal)
AP 19-21	University of Nottingham Concordat implementation action plan for the 2019-2021 reporting period. This report was written against the 2019 Concordat
AP 22-24	University of Nottingham Concordat implementation action plan for the 2022-24 reporting period. This report was written against the 2019 Concordat
AS	Athena SWAN
CEDARS	Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey
CES	Careers and Employability Service
CPD	Continued Professional Development
CROS	Careers in Research Online Survey (now replaced by CEDARS)
DoR	Directors of Research
ECR	Early Career Researcher
ECRLP	Early Career Leadership Programme
ED	Equality and Diversity
ED&I	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
HoS	Head of School
HR	Human Resources
LMA	Leadership and Management Academy
NL	University of Nottingham Libraries (formerly LRLR)
NRLP	Nottingham Research Leaders Programme
PD	Professional Development
PDPR	Professional Development and Performance Review
PI	Principal Investigator
RA	Researcher Academy (formerly Graduate School pre-Sept 2020)
RAFL	Researcher Academy Faculty Leads
RC	Research Committee (formerly Research Board, RB)
REC	Race Equality Charter
RI	Research and Innovation
RS	Research-only Staff
RSC	Research Staff Champion
RSG	Research Staff Group
RS rep	Research Staff representative
UEB	University Executive Board