

Consultation on the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Concordat Strategy Group (CSG)

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Consultation on the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

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Contents

Foreword.....	3
1 Executive summary.....	4
2 Introduction.....	7
3 Approach.....	7
3.1 Process of the consultation.....	7
3.2 Timing and promotion.....	8
3.3 Analysis.....	8
4 Response.....	8
5 Results.....	10
5.1 Ensuring effectiveness of the Concordat.....	10
5.2 Structure.....	11
5.3 Beneficiaries of the Concordat.....	13
5.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion.....	18
5.5 Professional and career development.....	19
5.6 Employment conditions.....	23
5.7 Communication and dissemination.....	27
5.8 Practice sharing.....	29
5.9 Ownership and governance.....	29
5.10 Reviewing progress.....	31
5.11 Tracking researchers' careers.....	35
6 Conclusions.....	37
6.1 Structure of the Concordat.....	38
6.2 Concordat beneficiaries.....	38
6.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion.....	38
6.4 Professional development.....	39
6.5 Employment.....	39
6.6 Communication, dissemination and practice sharing.....	40
6.7 Governance.....	40
6.8 Next steps.....	41
Appendix 1. Consultation survey questions.....	42
Appendix 2. Overview of respondents and participants.....	47

Foreword



Professor Julia Buckingham, CBE, Chair of Concordat Strategy Group, and Vice-Chancellor and President, Brunel University London

I think I can safely say that, as a sector, we have been part of an incredible journey over the last year in helping to progress the review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

Since the CSG announcement of a ten-year review of the Concordat; an Independent Review Panel has been formed, led by Professor Bogle; a resulting report from the Independent Review Panel has been published; a sector consultation has taken place; and now on behalf of the CSG, I have pleasure in publishing the report of the sector consultation on the review recommendations.

The consultation received almost 600 responses from both organisations and individuals, including those managing or supporting researchers and researchers themselves. The 5,000+ free text responses alone truly demonstrate the level of sector engagement, reinforcing the relevance and necessity of a revised Concordat. On behalf of CSG, I would like to thank colleagues across the sector for their responses, which have been incredibly helpful in shaping the revised text of the Concordat.

The responses welcomed the opportunity to clearly define the specific responsibilities of funders, employers, principal investigators/managers of researchers and researchers, while showing the interdependencies and collective effort needed across the sector to take the agenda forward.

The consultation also revealed that over 95% of both organisation and individual respondents think support for researchers to develop their career and research identity should be increased. Precarity of employment and equality of opportunity were other key themes, though the sector recognises that solutions are not straight-forward.

The report will prove a useful evidence-based resource for institutions, funders and other stakeholders to consider in their decision-making around supporting the career development of researchers.

The next stage is for the Concordat Writing Group, led by Professor Dianne Berry to complete the complex challenge of attaining the right balance of the, often conflicting, opinions of the sector to produce a revised Concordat text that will work for the diverse range of stakeholders involved.

The CSG looks forward to sharing the draft of the revised text for sector input and subsequently publishing the final Concordat revision this summer. Whilst being mindful that success can only be realised through full implementation of the Concordat principles, as a sector we should be proud of the milestone we have collectively reached so far to help support the future generation of researchers and UK research and innovation.

1 Executive summary

The almost 600 responses to the consultation by the Concordat Strategy Group (CSG) on the recommendations of the independent review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers came from a range of stakeholders: 20% from organisations, primarily universities; 80% from individuals, primarily research staff, lecturers and professors. The thoroughness and richness of responses revealed a high level of commitment to the Concordat and improving the career development of research staff. Many saw the revision of the Concordat as an opportunity to provide fresh impetus to this agenda and link into the wider UK strategy for research and innovation.

Overwhelmingly, respondents welcomed the opportunity to revitalise the Concordat, and supported the recommendations and proposed focus on clearly defining the responsibilities and interdependencies of the key stakeholder groups: funders, employers, principal investigators/managers of researchers and researchers. There was less agreement on expressing the Principles as obligations, with many organisations preferring these as expectations. Conversely, many individual respondents expressed scepticism about whether anything would change and supported specific obligations with associated consequences for not achieving them.

There were some key areas where strong concerns were raised about the detail and implementation of some of the recommendations. A theme that fed through the responses to

The definition of a researcher should be explicitly broadened to include all research staff



all the recommendations highlighted the importance of recognising the diversity between and within institutions and providing the flexibility for institutions to implement the Principles of the Concordat to best suit their institutional contexts and research environments. This was most apparent in relation to defining the beneficiaries for the Concordat and any future requirements for professional development. There was a clear distinction of views between research-intensive institutions with large populations of research staff, and less research-intensive institutions with correspondingly smaller numbers of research staff, who often have strategies to increase the research capacity of their academic staff.

The importance of professional development for research staff was well supported, particularly by individual respondents. However, there were institutional concerns about who an obligation to allow 20% of time would apply to and how it would be resourced; with many expecting this to be funded through grants. Several respondents highlighted the risks of creating a two-tier system for research staff and lack of parity with other staff. Many of the concerns centred around identifying who this recommendation applied to, the definition of professional development activities and the unintended message that focusing on research independence would send.

Increase support for researchers to develop their career and research identity



There was overwhelming support for highlighting equality, diversity and inclusion; integrating this throughout the Concordat and for extending it beyond protected characteristics. The overlap with Athena Swan was regularly mentioned, with many noting the importance of

linking into existing legislation and frameworks to avoid duplication. The importance of highlighting wellbeing and mental health within the Concordat emerged as a strong theme, with several respondents noting the need to include associated support for managers of researchers and consideration of their needs.

Precarity of employment was recognised as a significant challenge, with many individual responses highlighting this as the single most important problem to solve. Organisation responses identified this as a systemic issue and cited funders' roles in reducing the use of fixed term contracts through more flexibility in grant conditions. Forced mobility and lack of progression were both linked to the use of fixed term contracts. However, the risk of the Concordat providing unintended messages was also highlighted, particularly increasing expectations of long-term careers in academia, and undervaluing careers beyond academia and the benefits of mobility. Equality of opportunity and articulating the respective responsibilities for all stakeholder groups came through as important considerations. The value of sharing examples of existing practice was commonly noted in this area.

Address the use of fixed term contracts for researchers



Everyone agreed that the Concordat should be concise, written in plain language and accessible to different stakeholders through 'lenses' and interactive technology. Practice sharing through a dedicated UK repository and local and UK events were generally welcomed, together with regular updating of the Concordat to keep it current. A majority commented on the significant challenge of and need to raise awareness with research staff and managers of researchers.

There was strong agreement that the Concordat should be owned by the sector and the membership of the CSG should better reflect the four stakeholder groups, particularly in greater research staff representation. There was strong support for senior institutional management championing the Concordat as well as significant, but not universal, support for individual organisations signing up to the Concordat Principles.

Organisation respondents valued reviewing progress at UK and organisational level, although there were mixed views with some stating concern about the administrative burden and the need for collectively agreed, responsible metrics that recognise institutional and disciplinary context. Embedding progress review into existing mechanisms, such as REF and grant reporting processes, was suggested by some. Contextualised benchmarking and sharing practice were seen as helpful with CROS, PIRLS and the HR Excellence in Research Award all being mentioned. Some respondents raised concerns about the potential use of league tables, preferring a qualitative case study approach which could take into account context and facilitate practice sharing. There was overwhelming support for having comprehensive data on research staff career paths at institutional and UK level.

Benchmarking progress against others is helpful



Institutions should be signatories of the revised Concordat



HR Excellence in Research Award is useful in supporting implementation of the Concordat principles



Collection of researcher career data is important at an organisational and national level



Following the consultation, a Concordat Writing Group was set up by the CSG to take these outcomes and reflect them in the revision of the Concordat Principles, responsibilities and supporting explanations. It is expected that the draft revised Concordat will be shared with the sector in May/June and finalised at the end of June. The CSG is currently reviewing its governance structures, membership and terms of reference.

“The Concordat can play a role in changing the course of employment and the entire research and innovation ecosystem by focusing and rewarding the creation of stable employment conditions and genuine career paths through the structuring of grants and the oversight of institutions as employers. Ten years on from the original Concordat, when so much that is fundamental to the employment of researchers has NOT changed, it would be a disgrace for the sector to miss this opportunity to create a document that can help drive real change.”

2 Introduction

An Independent Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (“the Concordat”) was commissioned in 2018, by the CSG, ten years since the publication of the Concordat in 2008. The review aimed to evaluate the impact of the Concordat by assessing progress in implementing its Principles, whether the Concordat was still needed and to make recommendations for the future of the Concordat, its governance and implementation. The Expert Review Panel reviewed existing evidence relating to the implementation of the Concordat Principles, as well as commissioning a community consultation and undertaking a contextual analysis of the research environment in the UK¹.

The Expert Review Panel concluded that the Concordat has had a significant impact on the support for the career development of researchers. However, progress in implementing the Concordat is variable across the Principles and inconsistent across employing institutions. The Review Panel concluded that the Concordat should continue to have a role going forward and should be updated to reflect the changing research environment and to keep it current. The Panel made a series of recommendations on how it should be revised and how additional drivers will enable further cultural change through closer links to research funding and sharing of examples of good practice.

The CSG, which is responsible for the governance of the Concordat, published a response² to the review report in September 2018, welcoming this outcome alongside announcing a sector consultation on the recommendations to inform the publication of a revised Concordat in 2019.

This report describes the CSG sector consultation that took place from October 2018 to January 2019 on the review recommendations, including both an online element and a series of sector events. The report provides an overview of the survey respondents, the quantitative results, themes and sentiments arising from the free-text responses, and the discussions at the associated consultation events.

3 Approach

3.1 Process of the consultation

The purpose of the sector consultation on the recommendations of the Independent Review Panel was to identify, understand and evaluate the perspectives of the main stakeholder groups to inform a redrafting of the Concordat. To gain both depth and breadth, the consultation included an online survey, sector consultation events, and analysis of social media commentary.

The online survey covered demographics, including whether the response was on behalf of a group/organisation or an individual, and questions regarding the organisation type and role of the respondent. The questions were structured around the main recommendations of the review report, with quantitative rating scales to gauge broad attitudes and significant opportunities to give free text responses to understand the nuance and caveats of responses.

¹ Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, June 2018
<https://www.ukri.org/files/skills/concordatreviewreport-jun2018-pdf/>

² The Concordat Strategy Group response to the Independent Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers <https://www.ukri.org/files/skills/csg-concordat-review-response-september-2018-pdf/>

Respondents were informed of the data management processes and their rights through a data privacy notice published online³ and linked from the online platform. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. It was possible to respond anonymously, however, some participants consented to provide their name and contact information for follow up. The full list of questions can be found in Appendix 1. Consultation survey questions.

Three sector consultation events were hosted by members of the CSG in London, Bristol and Edinburgh. A further event was held in York, to increase geographical reach. A specific event for researchers was held in Oxford, in collaboration with the UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA). Each event was attended by participants from a range of geographic locations, job roles, types of institution and other interested organisations, for example research funders and professional bodies. The list of participating organisations is given in Appendix 2. Overview of respondents and participants.

3.2 Timing and promotion

The online consultation launched on 30 October and remained open for eight weeks (excluding the Christmas holiday period), closing on 7 January 2019. The consultation events took place between 4 and 14 December, with additional consultation and promotion taking place at conferences and researcher workshops hosted by Coventry University, Imperial College London, UCEA, UUK, and Vitae, as well as informal promotion at other events and meetings. As a result of the consultation, many institutions also held their own internal meetings and events to canvass views of their research populations.

Social media promotion and email communication was conducted by members of the CSG, with stakeholder reach including researchers, research managers, HR professionals and directors, researcher developers, union representatives, vice chancellors and research funders. Over 150 tweets promoted the consultation between September 2018 and January 2019 which were amplified through large numbers of retweets.

3.3 Analysis

The consultation survey was analysed using a mixed methods approach, with the quantitative analysis being used as a framework to understand the broad sentiments by stakeholder group to the different recommendations, followed by both planned and exploratory thematic analyses to saturation. Responses from organisations and individuals were analysed separately in order to uncover any differences in attitude. Comparisons between institution types and individual roles were also explored and are reported below where the trends differ.

4 Response

The response from stakeholders within the research community was excellent, for the consultation events and the consultation survey.

A total of 597 complete responses to the survey were received from organisations and individuals. This consisted of 114 organisation or group responses and 483 individual responses. The profile of these two types of respondents are reflected in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

³ <https://www.crac.org.uk/launch-of-online-consultation-for-concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers>

Figure 4.1 Responses on behalf of groups or organisations, by type

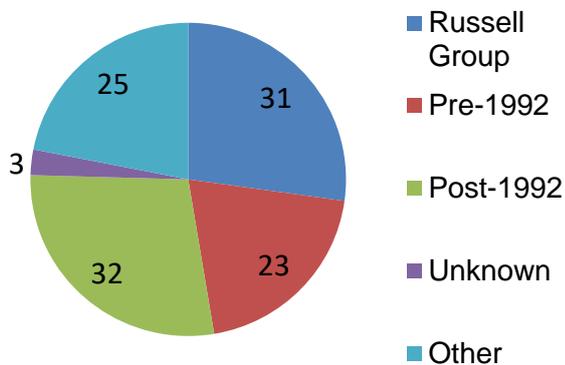
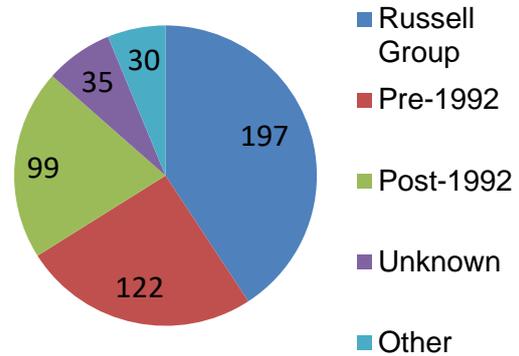


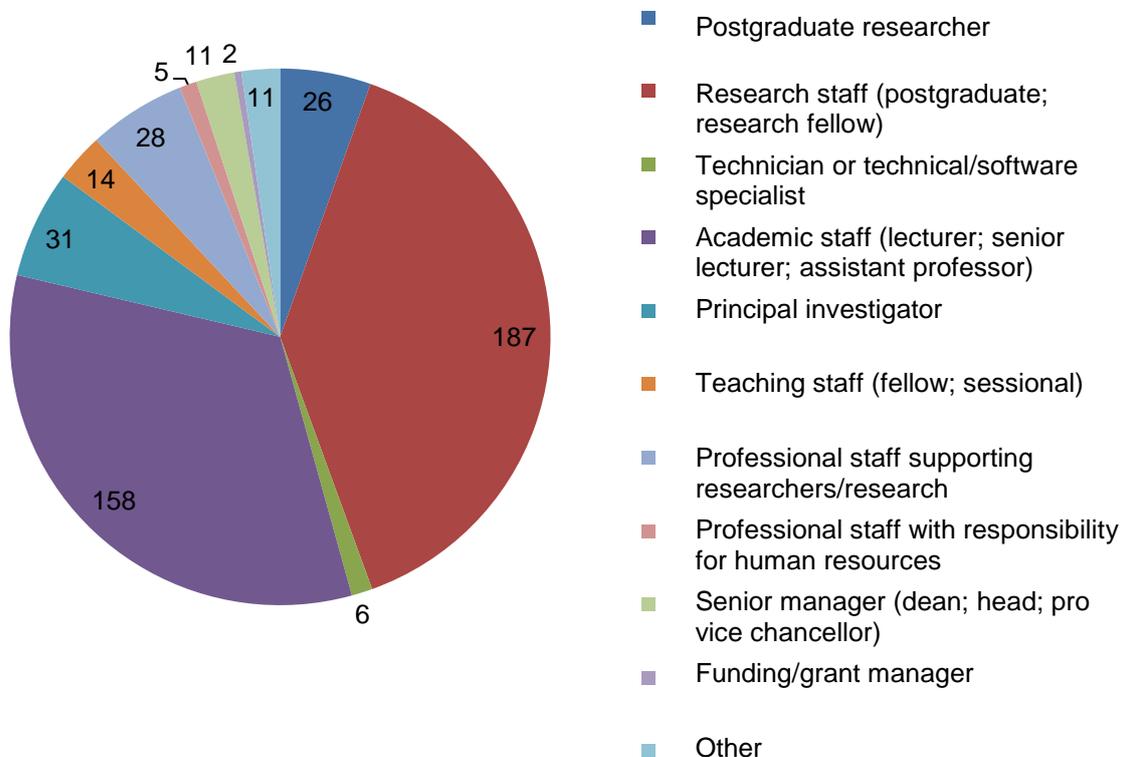
Figure 4.2 Responses on behalf of individuals, by type



In total 76 different universities and research institutes responded; multiple group responses were received from some organisations. This consisted of 22 Russell Group, 23 pre-1992 and 31 post-1992 institutions. The full list of responding organisations and groups is given in Appendix 2.

Individual respondents were classified by their organisation type (Figure 4.2) and their job role (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Individual responses by job role (N=483)



5 Results

The subsections below summarise the key themes from the 41 survey questions (see Appendix 2), accompanied by the relevant quantitative data. Free-text comments are quoted to provide context and to demonstrate the breadth of opinion, where applicable. Any differences between organisation responses and individual responses are highlighted, with other data splits (such as organisation type or individual role) shown where the trends or sentiments differ.

5.1 Ensuring effectiveness of the Concordat

Respondents were asked to provide a broad overview of what would make the revised Concordat more effective than the current Concordat. Many organisation responses noted that updating the Concordat is a valuable opportunity to reflect the many changes in the sector and the research environment since its initial publication in 2008. This included the opportunity to connect with related initiatives to avoid duplication of effort and ensure cross messaging. Many mentioned the range of ‘Concordats’ that had been published since 2008, and particularly Athena Swan. Bringing this alignment will help drive forward increased engagement and cultural change.

Organisations and (to a lesser extent) individual respondents raised shared responsibility as both an opportunity and a challenge for implementation, and that the future Concordat should make overlapping responsibilities clear. Some highlighted the importance of senior responsibility within institutions, as shared ownership within institutions is critical but can also be a barrier to making progress. Increased buy-in and support from funders was seen as crucial for gaining traction within institutions by creating clear expectations on employers and principal investigators. Some mentioned that ownership and accountability at sector level should also be transparent. A revised Concordat that clearly articulates these interconnectivities could help stakeholders work together to make real progress.

“The new Concordat must have buy-in from all partners, be they Government, HEIs, funders, institutions, Royal Societies, organisations and perhaps most importantly – the postdocs themselves.”

The availability of sufficient resources to implement some of the review recommendations, particularly increased time for development, was a major theme from organisation responses. A revised Concordat was seen as an opportunity to achieve structural changes in how funding is awarded, for example through terms and conditions of grants, grant reporting requirements, and building into REF environment assessment. The use of fixed term contracts and mobility were both identified as intractably related to the funding environment. Using positive drivers through the funding mechanisms were often seen as key to changing the culture and overall experience of research staff by addressing entrenched attitudes. Conversely, some respondents raised concerns about a two-tier system developing with researchers funded by smaller charities, industry or directly by institutions not having the same access to, for example, development opportunities.

Another major theme from organisation responses was recognising the diversity of institutional context and research environments, and therefore for the importance of including flexibility within the Concordat. They mentioned different institutional types/sizes; differences in research culture even within the same institution; differing numbers of research only staff; terminology and identity of relevant staff groups; and heterogeneity within staff groups (career stage, protected characteristics, etc.). Conversely, ensuring consistency of implementation across and within organisations and having a Concordat that works for all was also seen as important.

Organisation responses highlighted the challenge of raising awareness with researchers, particularly as a transient population, which would need sustained effort to engage. Both organisations and researchers highlighted the need for principal investigators to be aware of and bought into the Concordat and supported specific expectations for this group.

“A consistent challenge is posed by the inherently fluid and transient nature of the research workforce; this creates a situation in which establishing an effective culture of career development is even more challenging, as the latter competes for time with the research project and the need to identify the next contract etc.”

The importance of the Concordat having ‘teeth’ to enforce compliance by employers was strongly reiterated by researchers, who often didn’t perceive any tangible benefits from the current Concordat. They were sceptical about its ability to make changes to core issues for them such as job security and the ability to progress within a research career track. Job security was the most commented theme for individuals, with open contracts limited by short-term funding seen no more favourably than fixed term contracts, and 3 to 5-year contracts seen as the minimum duration acceptable, and that without solving this core issue, other efforts of the Concordat would be wasted.

Individual respondents were more likely to raise the definition of research staff and who benefits from the Concordat, specifically the opportunity to include teaching fellows who are not ‘REF-able’ but are in a similarly precarious role. They raised the need to integrate research, teaching and scholarship as equally-valued parts of the ‘whole’ of an academic career path. Some respondents raised the need for institutions to have clear, more flexible progression pathways that enable researchers and teaching fellows on fixed term contracts to move into stable roles and that do not inadvertently exclude these groups. A few respondents noted how important it is that the language of the revised Concordat does not place academic research careers as higher in status than other career possibilities both within and beyond academia.

“A significant challenge across the sector involves the culture shift needed to place academic and non-academic career paths on an equal footing (Rec 11), thereby removing the stigma that is still sometimes attached to those who choose to move beyond academia, and allowing us to better prepare our researchers for this diversity in career paths.”

Finally, a few organisation responses specifically mentioned the potential challenges in implementing the Concordat posed by Brexit and possible ineligibility for the HR Excellence in Research Award and the need to be internationally competitive in our research environment.

5.2 Structure

There is consensus in the survey data across all respondent types that the revised Concordat should include Principles, obligations and examples of good practice (Figure 5.1) and should be structured to reflect the four key audiences: researchers; principal investigators; employers and funders (Figure 5.2). However, the revised Concordat should recognise and emphasise the shared responsibilities, interdependencies and interactions between stakeholder groups; the Principles can apply to multiple stakeholder groups.

A common theme from the free-text comments was that the use of expectations and outcomes would be more helpful than overly prescriptive obligations, especially to allow different types of institution to interpret and embed in their own institutional context. Additionally, the Concordat should clearly demonstrate the benefits for each group of stakeholders, and not only the expectations on them.

“Use of the term ‘obligations’ is problematic. Greater sector and institutional buy-in could be achieved by using ‘expectations’ instead, as this suggests more institutional independence and input in the process, rather than the imposition of rules onto stakeholders. This alternative would also enable the removal from the Concordat of inconsistent uses of ‘should’ ‘will’ and ‘must’, which imply different degrees of agency and importance where none may be intended.”

“The Concordat needs to be sufficiently flexible to be useful and relevant to very different institutional contexts. This is why we do not recommend use of ‘obligations’ but rather a focus on demonstrating commitment to the principles as appropriate to the institution. This would improve accessibility to the diverse range of UK HEIs.”

Several organisation respondents noted that membership of the stakeholder groups can be fluid; an individual may be both a principal investigator and a researcher; funders can also be employers and vice versa. The terminology of ‘principal investigator’ was highlighted as particularly unhelpful in the arts and humanities context and possibly in less research intensive HEIs, with the addition of terms such as research leaders/lead researcher and line managers/managers of researchers being more inclusive.

“We broadly agree with the breakdown of groups as researchers, principal investigators, employers and funders. However, the definition of what a ‘principal investigator’ encompasses should be broadened to cover the full range of academic line managers. The title of ‘principle investigator’ is inherently hierarchical in an era of team science, and this definition may not be suitable. Additionally, line manager and principal investigators responsibilities often no longer completely align. [We] would welcome the inclusion of an acknowledgement that more broadly reflects the diversity of investigator and line manager roles.”

It was noted that the content of the revised Concordat should be easily extracted for use within funder policies and institutional strategies, implementation/action plans, researcher contracts, professional development reviews/appraisals, monitoring by individual organisations and the higher education sector more generally.

Case studies and examples of practice were generally perceived as useful and preferably in a live online format, rather than contained within the body of the Concordat ‘document’, both for brevity and to keep the support for the Concordat current.

Figure 5.1 Support for inclusion of the following areas within the structure of the revised Concordat

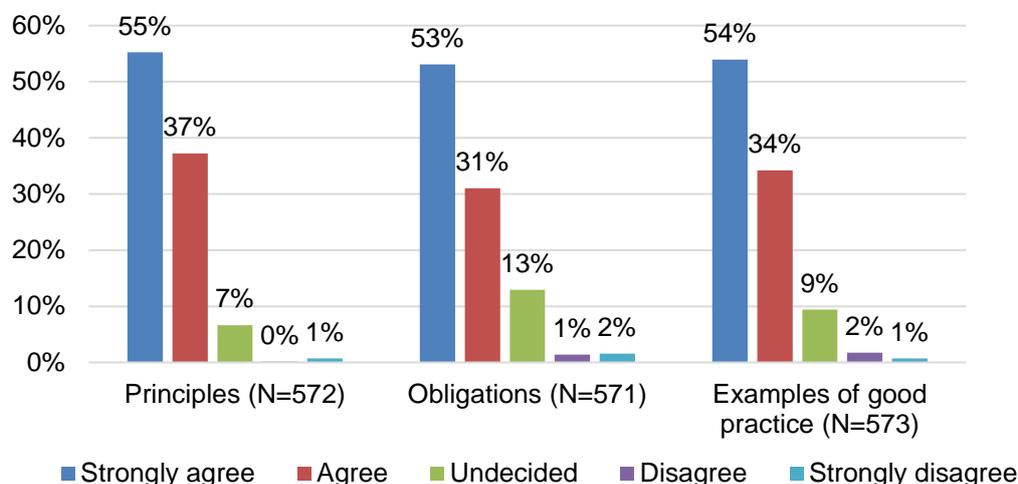
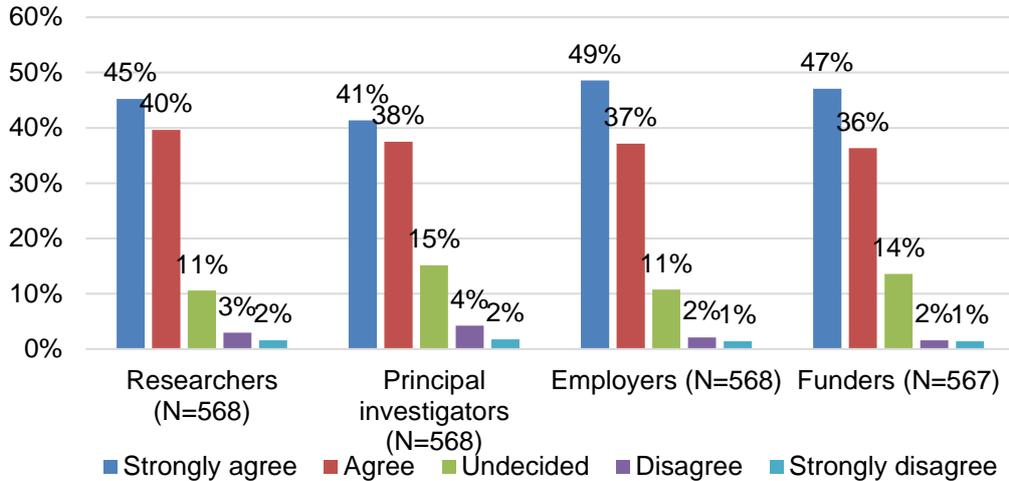


Figure 5.2 Support for the following audiences to be represented by the structure of the revised Concordat

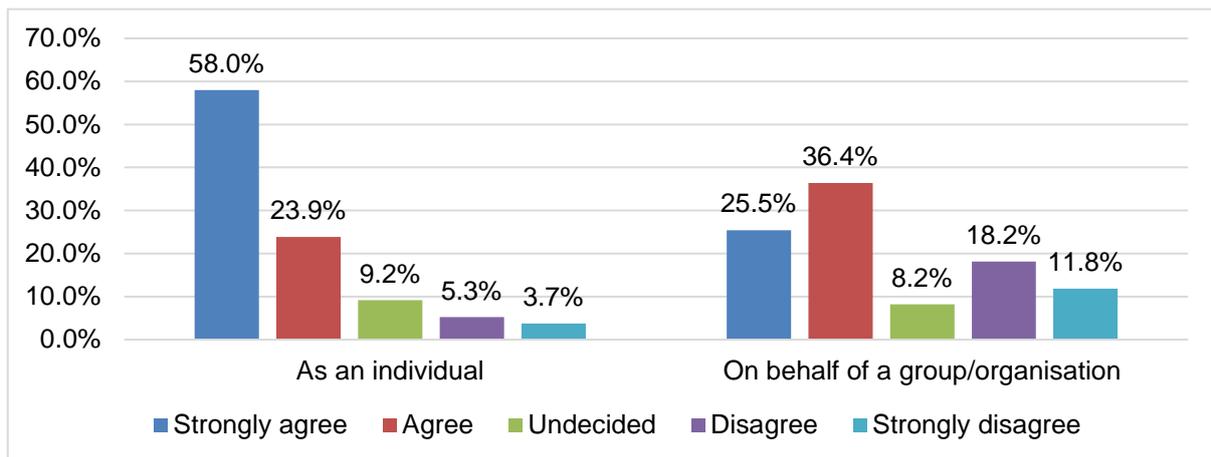


5.3 Beneficiaries of the Concordat

5.3.1 Definition of a 'researcher' within the Concordat

The question of who should be considered a 'researcher' within the context of the Concordat revealed a varied response. Although overall the majority of respondents (75%) agreed or strongly agreed with the principle of inclusivity, the extent of this agreement differed by type of respondent and frequently with caveats, even from those who agreed or strongly agreed. Amongst individual responses 80% agreed that the definition should be broadened to include a wider population, whereas, responses from organisations included a significant proportion who disagreed or strongly disagreed (31%) with the recommendation as shown in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Response to recommendation to explicitly broaden the definition of a researcher



"We agree that the spirit behind the Concordat should apply more broadly to all staff engaged in research. However, it is neither feasible nor desirable for all the recommendations in the Concordat [review] to be applied to all those engaged in research regardless. There is also a danger of the Concordat becoming diluted and losing its primary focus due to widening out the remit to such a broad audience."

When broken down by institution type the data revealed significant differences (Figure 5.4). Individual responses by institution type reflected the overall pattern of agreement shown for individual respondents. Amongst organisation responses, however, within Russell Group and pre-1992 organisation responses there was an almost equal balance between those that agreed and disagreed with the recommendation to broaden the definition. The associated comments strongly cautioned against using a broad definition that would dilute the focus on the original 'research staff' 'in need' and create identification issues. Not surprisingly given the size of research staff populations in these two groups, there were clear issues of scale with strong concerns (from both those that agreed and disagreed with the recommendation) over the level of resource that would be needed to implement all the recommendations for everyone within a vague, broad definition.

Conversely, post-1992 organisation responses, many with much smaller numbers of research staff and strategies to have more research-active academic staff, predominately agreed with the recommendation (72% agree and strongly agree) to broaden the definition. They highlighted the value of including a broader group of researchers within the context of their research environment and that it is already existing practice within the current Concordat. However, some of these respondents also acknowledged the resource implications of some of the recommendations with a wider group of beneficiaries.

"If the definition is to be broadened, there will also be time and resource implications in determining who is research active and meeting the obligations for the distinct groups which may in itself detract from the core focus of the Concordat."

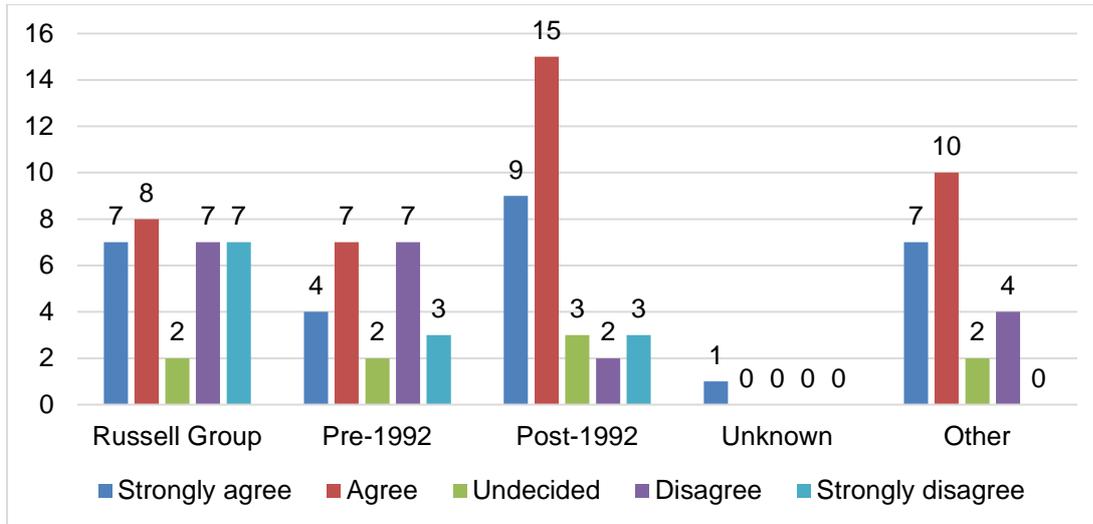
Some respondents highlighted the challenge of monitoring progress in implementing the Concordat Principles if the beneficiary group for the Concordat was unclear or different for different organisations. Several responses identified other frameworks or policies for possible definitions of researchers, including the REF, Research Council guidelines, other funders, HESA Staff Record, Roberts agenda, and the 2008 Concordat, whilst acknowledging that these definitions are not consistent in definition and terminology. At least one respondent noted that it may be helpful for the Concordat to produce sector endorsed definitions of the different career stages of researchers (especially early career researchers) that can be mirrored in funding calls.

"One way to make this more practically salient might be to push for more regularisation of job roles/definitions that include researcher in the job description, or, looking at it the other way something around best practice/national standards for designing researcher posts to have parity across the sector"

"Create and defend a meaningful and widely shared definition of ECR (e.g. 5 years post PhD), so that there is consistency across the sector and help create a more universal language and set of activities for support."

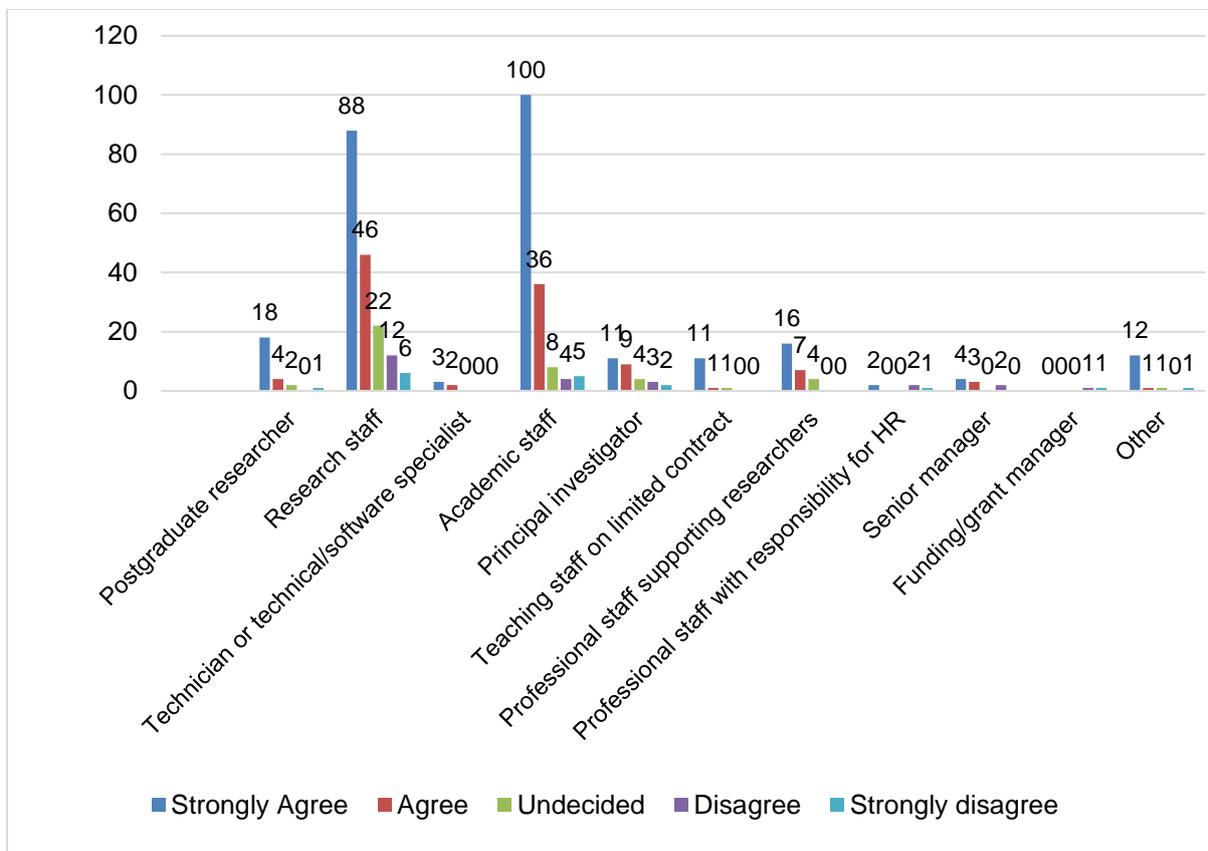
Overall, respondents welcomed both a clear and specific definition of the target group 'in need' of the Concordat and the freedom for HEIs to apply this flexibly within their own institutional contexts.

Figure 5.4 Response from organisations and groups to recommendation to explicitly broaden the definition of a researcher



The data from individual respondents was broken down further to examine the views by specific job roles (Figure 5.5). The two largest groups, research staff and academic staff, followed the pattern of agreement with the overall sample (72% and 88% agreement, respectively). The smaller group of principal investigators were also in agreement, though the majority was slighter (68%). All the other groups had small number of respondents.

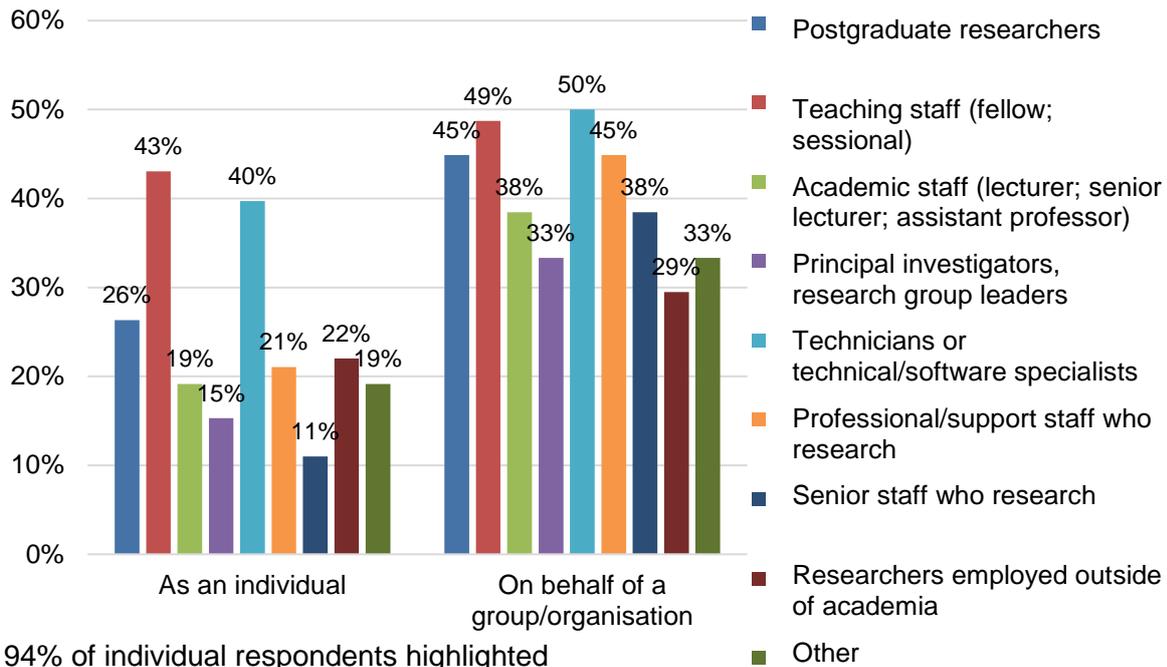
Figure 5.5 Response from individuals with different job roles to explicitly broaden the definition of a researcher



5.3.2 Who should be excluded from the Concordat?

When asked if there were any groups who should explicitly be excluded from the Concordat definition of a researcher, individual and organisation responses differed (Figure 5.6). Individual respondents were more likely to want to be inclusive in the definition of the beneficiaries of the Concordat than organisation respondents.

Figure 5.6 Response from individuals and organisations to who should be excluded from the definition of ‘researcher’



94% of individual respondents highlighted no groups to be excluded. Of the 6% who selected at least one group to be excluded, they were considerably more likely to identify teaching staff on limited contracts and technicians or technical specialists, representing 20% and 17%, respectively, of the total individual respondents.

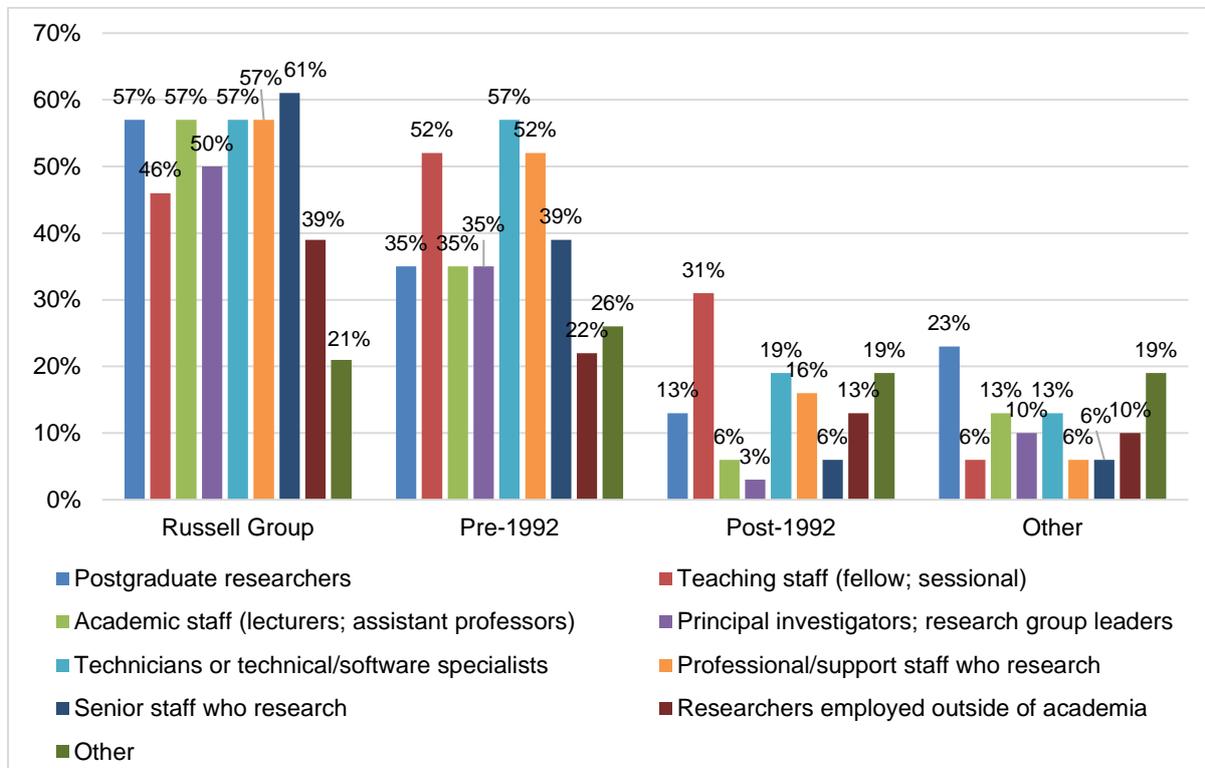
52% of organisation responses chose at least one group to exclude from the Concordat. Just under a third of these respondents selected to exclude all groups, with about half excluding teaching staff and technical staff.

When organisation responses are split by institution type (Figure 5.7) Russell Group respondents are more likely to want to exclude other groups with half or more respondents effectively wanting the Concordat definition to be confined to the current definition of ‘research staff’. Pre-1992 institution responses were next more likely to want to exclude other groups, with more than 50% wanting to exclude teaching staff, technicians and professional staff who undertake research. Post 1992 institutions and other respondents were least likely to want to exclude other groups.

Many respondents expressed mixed feelings about excluding some of these groups, particularly teaching fellows. It was widely acknowledged that this group also need support, but the challenges they face may be different, and the term ‘hidden researchers’ may be unhelpful both in identifying and in giving status to this group. Several respondents proposed that a similar ‘commitment’ may be needed for other staff groups, such as teaching staff, without trying to include everyone within this Concordat.

"Institutions should not feel obliged to duplicate the support available nor the monitoring/reporting requirements of different, overlapping awards (e.g. HR Excellence in Research [Award], Athena Swan, Technician Commitment)."

Figure 5.7 Responses from organisations and groups, by organisation type, for who should be excluded from the definition of 'researcher'

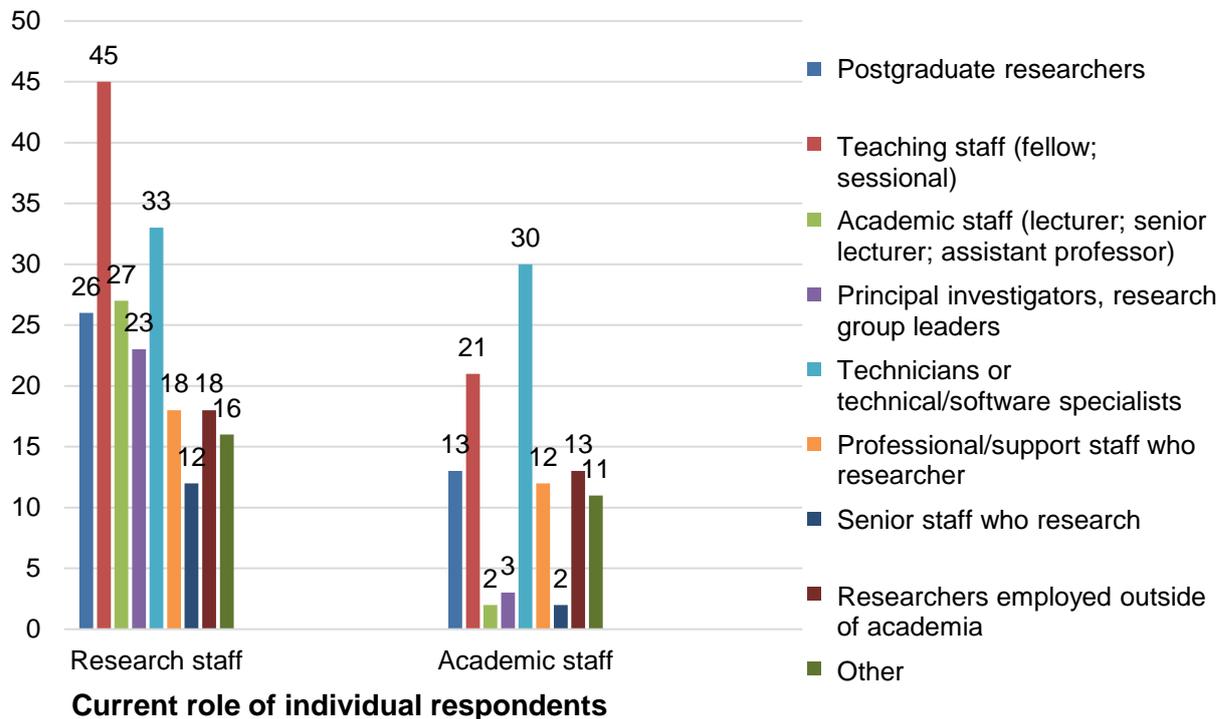


There was a clear theme that the remit of the Concordat should not be stretched to cover groups with existing frameworks/standards in place, for example, technicians, securely-employed academics, or researchers beyond higher education. It was stressed that the Concordat should highlight and link to the Technician's Commitment as a complementary area of good practice, without replicating it. Similar comments were made about other frameworks, such as Athena Swan.

Postgraduate researchers were identified as a group who would benefit from improvements in the research environment, but organisations were divided, primarily by research intensity, as to whether they should be included as a specific beneficiary of the Concordat.

Figure 5.8 shows the 'to be excluded' groups as proposed by individuals who hold three core job roles; research staff, academic staff and principal investigators.

Figure 5.8 Responses from individuals, by job role, for who should be excluded from the definition of 'researcher'



5.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

There was an overwhelming consensus from respondents for ensuring the Concordat aligns with, signposts, and does not duplicate the efforts of existing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) legislation, frameworks and reporting/monitoring that may be taking place at an institutional level or UK level. Respondents highlighted: Equality Act 2010, Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter, Stonewall, Disability Confident Employer, Mindful Employer, Carer Positive Employer, LGBT Charter, REF Code of Practice, Workplace Equality Index, Working Families Charity Awards, and Scottish Funding Councils' Outcome Agreements.

Many comments related to the interaction between the employment circumstances of contract researchers (fixed-term, limited progression opportunities, expectation of mobility) and protected characteristics, highlighting that some researchers/groups may be disproportionately affected and disadvantaged, for example, those with family and caring responsibilities or disability.

Some respondents commented that some employment benefits are linked to length of service (e.g. parental leave, annual leave) which disadvantages researchers who have successive fixed-term contracts and may create a source of stress, particularly for women. Inconsistency and/or lack of clarity around maternity pay and possibility of extending grants for maternity leave were also highlighted as particular concerns for equality, diversity and inclusion. Visa eligibility and payments compound the challenge for international researchers on successive contracts.

The importance of having examples of good practice to encourage and highlight was noted. Examples included: Daphne Jackson Fellowships, maternity coaching, mentoring and reverse mentoring, flexible working initiatives, leadership programmes for specific groups, outcomes from the EPSRC Inclusion Matters projects, Tapping All Our Talents review (Royal Society of Edinburgh, November 2018), workload reductions following career breaks, Forum

for Responsible Research Metrics, removing length of service requirements for access to employment benefits, and Vitae's Every Researcher Counts.

There was a strong theme that 'Inclusivity' within the Concordat should extend beyond protected characteristics to include, for example, clear and accessible language for all audiences and stakeholders, be inclusive of all discipline contexts (i.e. not overly focused on STEM/group/lab models), flexibility that allows the diversity of institutions to use the good practice highlighted, emphasis on the heterogeneity of experiences of researchers (e.g. those with previous careers, working part-time, remote working), relevance to researchers at different career stages, and acknowledging/valuing different career aspirations.

As with other areas of the Concordat, respondents acknowledged that support and training for managers of researchers in understanding EDI within their managerial role is crucial and that support for managers of researchers should also be underpinned by considerations of EDI.

Many comments described the important role of the Concordat in promoting a supportive and inclusive environment that encourages good practice and policies in addressing issues of wellbeing and mental health, working conditions, bullying and harassment, family friendly careers, gender pay gap, intersectionality, and ensuring we create better jobs for researchers.

"Important to acknowledge that there are wider issues in society re inequality (e.g.: gender pay gap, mental health, disability, ethnicity) which the Concordat will not resolve but could help to maintain a focus on".

"A supportive environment is required to enable disabled people to thrive in a research career. Not all disabilities are visible, some are temporary, long-term or permanent and disability is not currently well supported within the sector from recruitment to enabling access to conferences and mentorship."

5.5 Professional and career development

A clear theme which came through from the consultation events and the survey was that a commitment must be made by all stakeholders to the professional and career development of researchers. Respondents were asked to consider ways in which researchers could be supported, by employers and funders, in their career development and in establishing researcher identity (Figures 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11). This included the review recommendation of 20% of researcher time to be used for professional and career development, and development of researcher identity, including ten days training to be available to all researchers, annually.

"It is important that the Concordat overtly and very explicitly ring-fences time for personal and professional development. If poorly implemented, the Concordat could increase expectations to carry out additional activities in a group who are already struggling with maintaining a work-life balance. Equally, it is important that academic staff are given protected time and explicit workload allocation to support ECR career development."

Figure 5.9 Response to whether funders should place increased emphasis and support on uptake of 10 days' training (N=554)

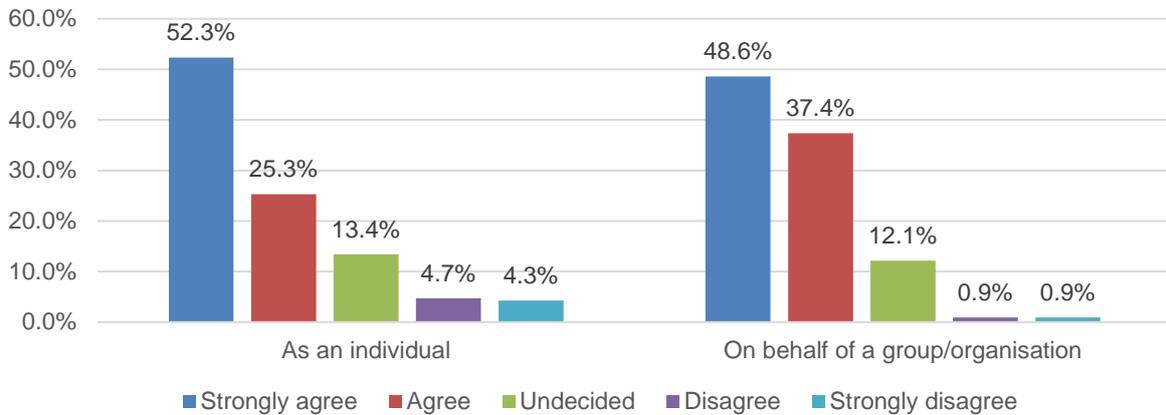


Figure 5.10 Response to whether employers place increased emphasis and support on uptake of 10 days' training (N=555)

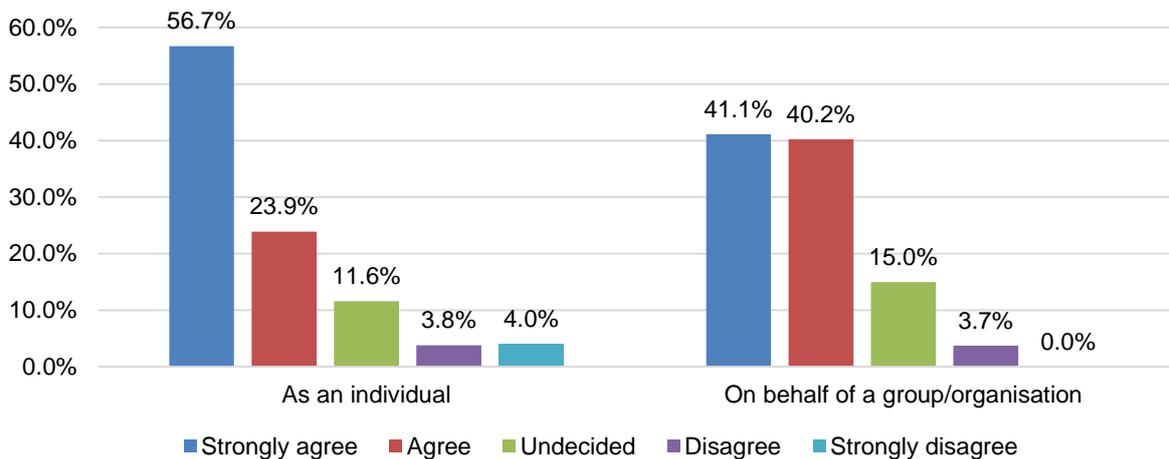
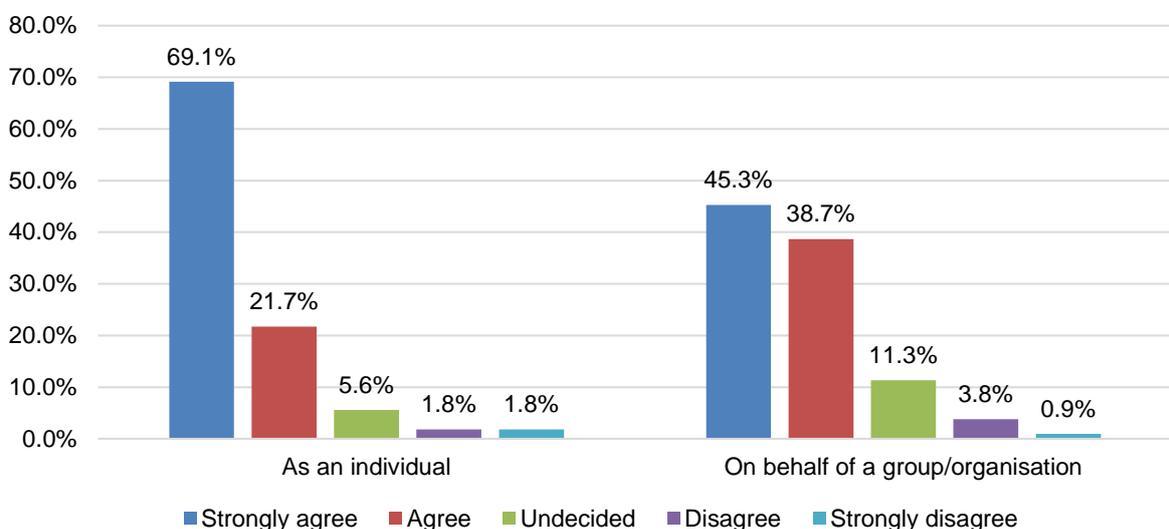


Figure 5.11 Response to whether allocated time should be specified within grants for developing researcher independence (N=553)



Among individuals, there was general agreement with the 20% time allowance for developing independent research and skills. However, among organisations the responses were more mixed, with many undecided (Figure 5.12). Figure 5.13 also shows organisation responses by institution type; with Pre-1992 and Post-1992 institution responses showing a number of respondents disagreed with the recommendation, whereas the Russell Group respondents were largely in agreement or undecided.

Figure 5.12 Responses to the question ‘20% of a researcher’s time allowed for developing independent research and skills’ (N=553)

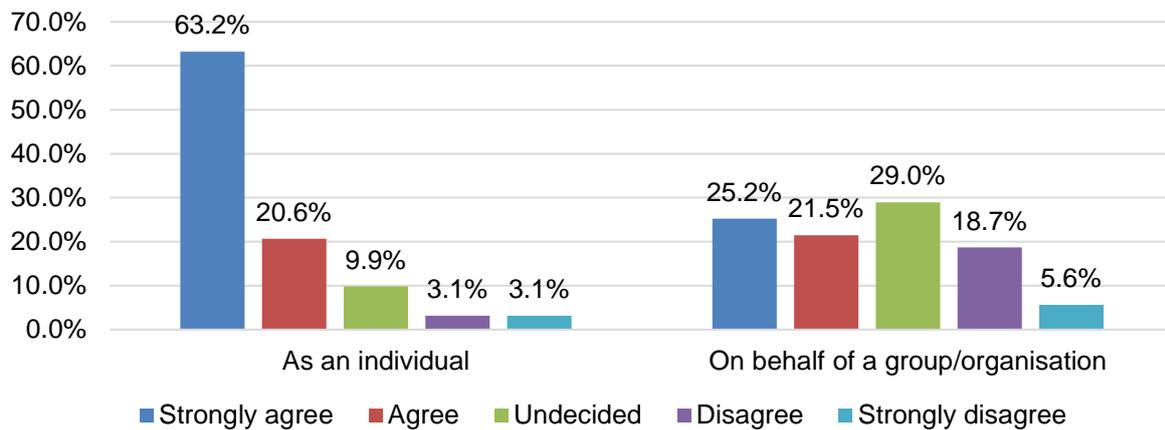
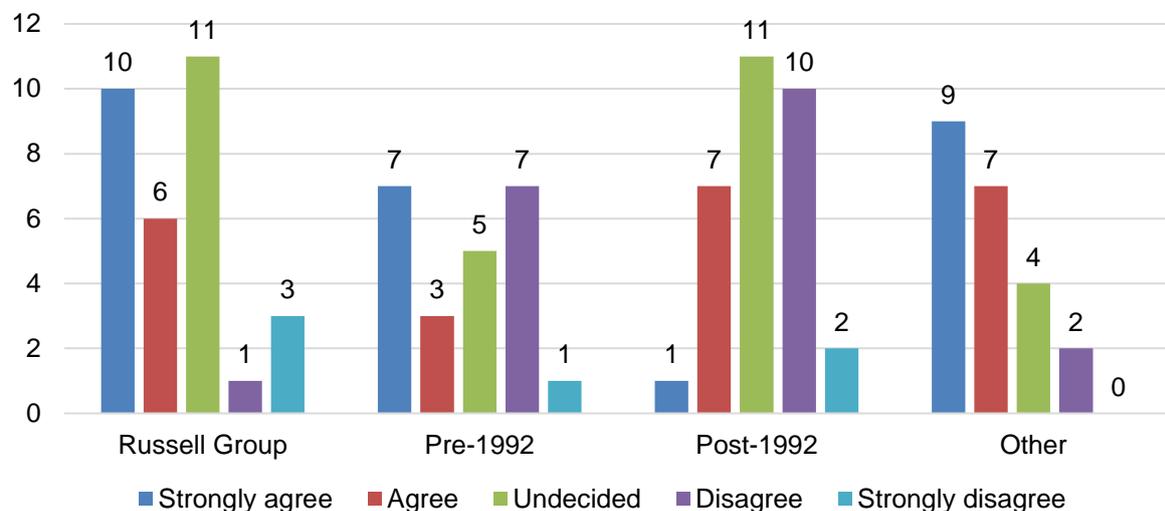


Figure 5.13 Responses to the question ‘20% of a researcher’s time allowed for developing independent research and skills’, by organisation type



The main caveat in relation to increased time for ‘independence’ was resource; in terms of equipment, consumables and expenses for independent research projects, as well as the loss of researcher time to funded projects and additional resource needed to monitor/report on implementation. It was frequently raised that an expectation of ‘20%’ of time spent on independent research or professional development would have to be funded by grants or through (limited) QR funding. This has the potential to create a two-tier system which would disadvantage researchers with other funding streams including non-UK, funding from smaller charities, companies and direct funding by the institution.

“A challenge of the current Concordat is that the responsibility on employers is high, which places them in a difficult position with respect to external funders of research. It is already a challenge to recover the full economic costs of research, despite the assumption in the Review that this is the norm. Increasingly universities are being asked to provide matched funding in support of research council and Government grant applications and it seems unlikely that industry and charities would wish to fund career development activities on top of their funded research projects. An assumption that funders would be prepared to resource career development obligations under the new Concordat feels somewhat optimistic.”

It was frequently mentioned that the ‘20%’ and ‘ten days training’ felt overly prescriptive and that a culture shift was needed for researchers to take advantage of additional development opportunities. Focusing on this culture shift through language such as ‘dedicated time’, ‘commitment to dialogue between line managers and researchers’, ‘good practice to allow at least ten days’ and ‘personal development plans with clear time allocation’ may be more helpful than providing prescriptive time-based guidelines.

Discussions at the sector events additionally highlighted potential confusion between the ‘20%’ and ‘ten days training’, (i.e. whether ‘20%’ is inclusive of the ‘ten days’) and the need for clarification of what each of these might encompass, how they might be monitored and what the expected outcomes might be.

Organisation responses linked the allocation of time for development with the definition of a researcher; noting that a broad definition would make resourcing more difficult for some institutions, while a narrow, exclusive definition may create tensions and inequality across staff groups. It was also felt to be a blunt instrument. Although ‘20%’ may be an appropriate benchmark for early career research-only staff, it may be too little for doctoral candidates and too much for established researchers or staff with a fractional research responsibility (e.g. teaching or technical staff).

Specifically, the situation is particularly complicated for researchers on very short-term or multiple fractional contracts, with more than one employer, and/or an extremely pressurised timeline. It could be that a restrictive time-allowance could create more stress for those researchers.

If specific allocated time is to be given, there was a strong message from organisation responses that the sector would welcome clear descriptions and definitions. In preference to ‘research independence’, some suggestions were made for alternative terminology to avoid confusion with REF or misinterpretation across disciplines, such as ‘career independence’, ‘autonomy’, ‘professional development’, and ‘planning for sustainable careers’.

Valuing ‘research independence’ was also seen as sending a potentially conflicting message against the need to give parity to all career pathways, many of which would not require research independence. Also, it is important to avoid implicitly de-valuing contributing to someone else’s research project. Respondents highlighted the drive for more collaborative research.

There was wide-ranging agreement that researchers should be supported in both on-the-job and additional professional development activities, such as, drafting funding applications, supervision, writing publications, peer reviewing publications, participating in institutional committees, attending conferences, public engagement and outreach, teaching, leadership training, internships and placements, or entrepreneurship, with a particular emphasis on mentoring (including cross-sector mentoring) as a good use of development time.

Relevant examples of practice include the Academic Professional Apprenticeship, Marie Cure Early Career Fellowships, MRC Career Development Award, University of Nottingham Bridging the Gaps and UNICAS funding initiatives.

The relationship between a researcher and their principal investigator or line manager was deemed to be central to implementing culture change around professional and career development. Some suggested individual agreements, as one approach, between researchers and their line managers with clear expectations, guidelines and examples. It was recognised by many respondents that as principal investigators and line managers are so integral to providing increased professional development time/support they may require training/support themselves to bring about a culture change, including demonstrating the benefits of such activities to themselves and their researchers.

“There is also still much to be done to effect culture change amongst principal investigators (PIs) around the opportunities afforded to research staff on their grants to develop their career paths.”

“The PI should be aware of the postdocs preferred route to independence or their next career step and should actively support this, while also signposting appropriate alternatives”

Concerns from individuals included funding for training and development activities, the practicalities of releasing time from grants, losing time on activities that might not build towards an academic or research career and enforced generic training with perceived limited value.

5.6 Employment conditions

The majority of respondents agreed that the revised Concordat should address the use of fixed term contracts, progression and promotion opportunities, and the expectation of mobility for researchers (see Figures 5.14, 5.15 and 5.16). Not surprisingly, individual respondents were more strongly in agreement with this recommendation, but organisation responses were also largely in agreement.

Stakeholders should be aware of legislation in this area in terms of employee rights and employers’ responsibilities. The Concordat shouldn’t seek to duplicate, but rather link to legal practice around the employment of fixed-term staff. It was mentioned that it would be useful to build on this with guidance and examples of existing good practice that showcase the diversity of institutions employing researchers.

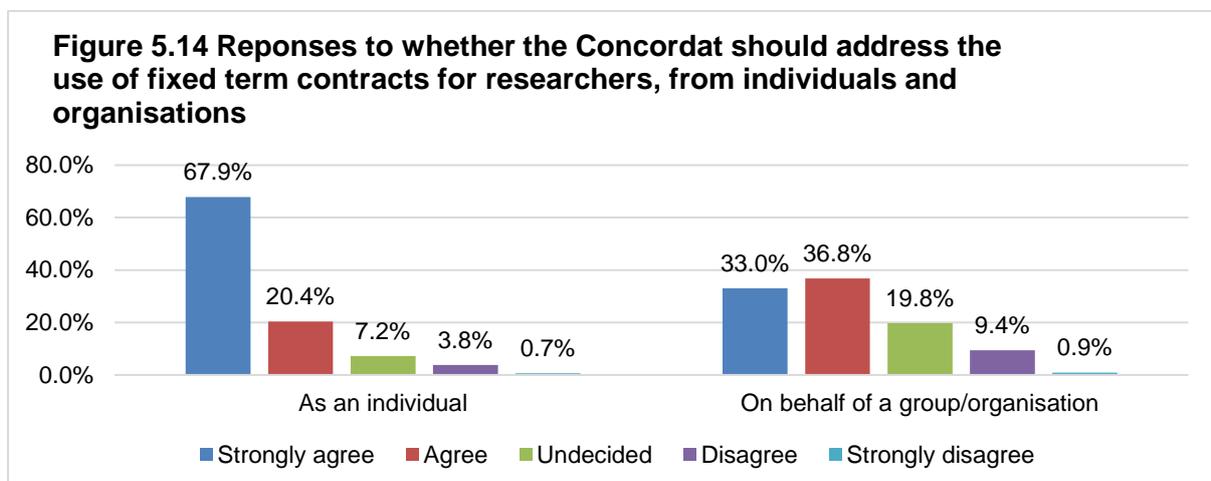


Figure 5.15 Responses to whether the Concordat should address the progression and promotion opportunities for researchers, from individuals and organisations

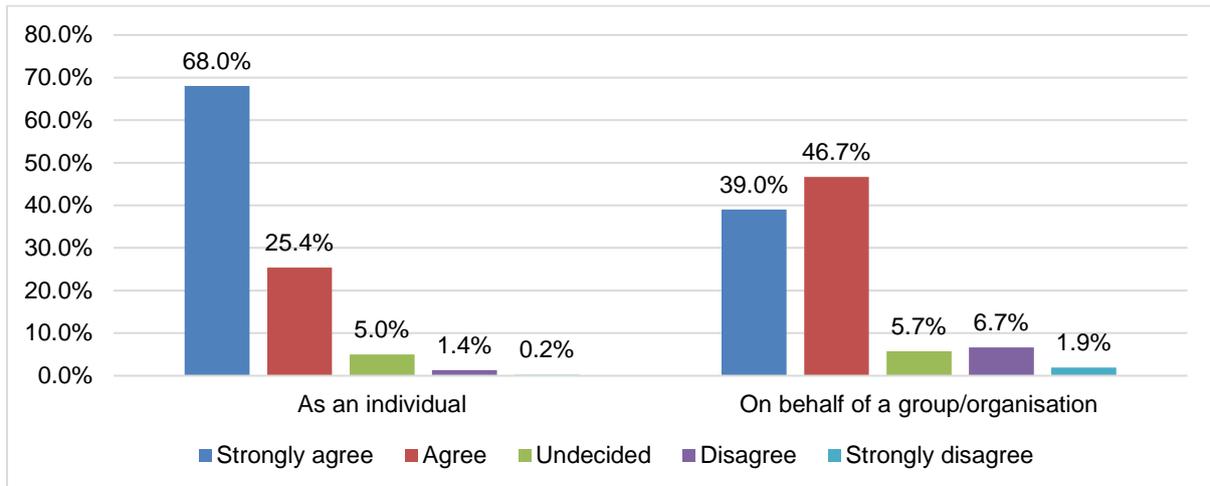
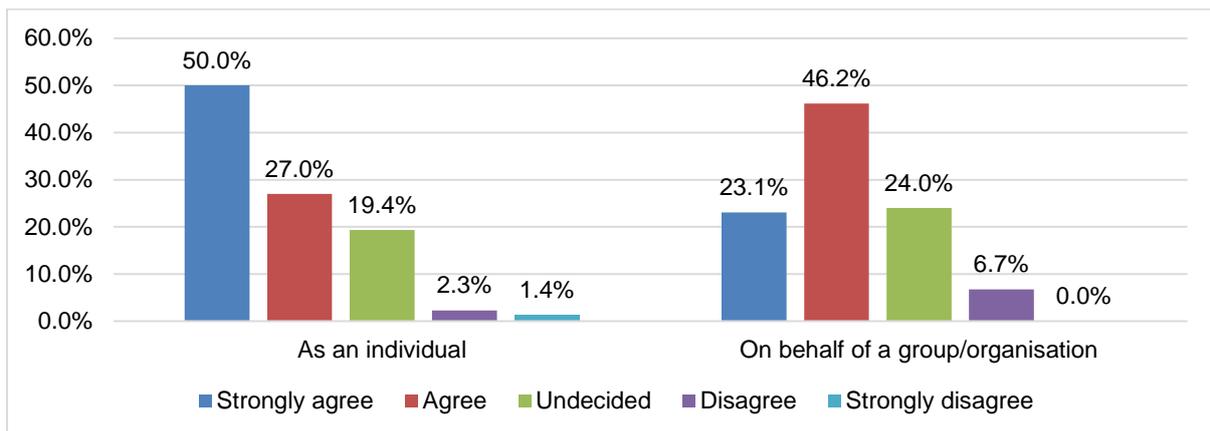


Figure 5.16 Responses to whether the Concordat should address the expectation of mobility for researchers, from individuals and organisations



5.6.1 Fixed term contracts

There was a common theme that the revised Concordat should address the practical issues and concerns that fixed-term contract researchers experience. As in the current Concordat, the value these researchers add to the community needs to be recognised.

“It is not appropriate to use fixed-term contracts within HEIs as a holding area for talent wishing to one day “land” an academic position. This model sequesters talent from the greater economy and is a source of disillusionment for the ECRs themselves. It is also important to note that the sector needs to be vigilant of the impact this has on different demographic groups, particularly those who may be less mobile due to caring and family responsibilities”

It was felt that fixed-term employment should not result in a lack of opportunity for career and professional development compared to other staff groups. Rather than abolishing the use of fixed term contracts without sustainable funding mechanisms, parity of treatment should be the focus across all staff roles, as well as equality of opportunity, including equality, diversity and inclusion factors such as gender.

An alternative to fixed-term contracts mentioned by some respondents is the move towards open contracts. This change in status provides a platform for open conversations about redeployment or redundancy. The benefits include retention of talent within the institution and a sense of value/security for the individual, with resulting productivity benefits for institutions and the sector. However, not all were in favour of open contracts as it can mask the challenges for individuals on such contracts.

“The move to open-ended contracts is not in and of itself delivering a better outcome. It is masking the fact that these contracts are still open-ended subject to continued funding – a clause that continues to make it difficult for research staff to, for example, get a mortgage.”

From an organisational point of view, some institutions stressed the need to retain flexibility in how they employ staff, especially in uncertain times (e.g. Brexit); removing this flexibility may have unintended consequences on the number of positions available and the positive aspects of fixed-term positions in contributing to the career development of researchers.

Many of the comments received mentioned the role funders could play in reducing the use of fixed-term contracts across the sector, with the grant funding model being a significant factor in fixing the duration of researcher contracts, where some institutions struggle to provide continuity or bridging of funding to all contract staff, particularly among smaller institutions. Some respondents suggested that funders could provide more opportunities for researchers without continuing contracts to apply for funding, which could be portable across institutions. They could also encourage inter-sectoral placements as a condition of funding to ensure permeability across sectors.

Another theme emerging around this topic is the role of managers of researchers in making fixed-term appointments in the first instance. It was suggested that they should be expected to justify these appointments, and at the end of a researcher’s contract they should help to find solutions to retain talent and experience. Examples of these solutions should be included in the good practice section of the revised Concordat.

“Fixed-term contracts within academia should not be seen as a pipeline to an academic career; instead they should be seen as a stepping stone to a wealth of opportunity within the whole of the economy. This is how they should be viewed by the institution, by the funders, by the PIs and most importantly by the researchers themselves. In this way, this issue links very strongly to the questions above about mobility and development opportunities. Fixed-term contracts can provide a vehicle for career development.”

5.6.2 Progression and promotion

While there was overall support from both individuals and organisations for addressing progression and promotion for researchers within the revised Concordat, some respondents (particularly organisations) reiterated the need to be clear about what success looks like and what the objectives are in this area. It was felt that the revised Concordat should set clear and realistic aspirations, both for individuals and the sector, considering that not all doctoral graduates can expect a long-term career in academic research.

“Key challenges associated with the progression and promotion of researchers are the limited number of academic research positions available, combined with a perceived lack of transferability of researchers between HE and non-HE institutions. On a national scale the Concordat could address these issues by promoting comparable career progression frameworks across the research sector and highlighting the transferable nature of researcher skill sets.”

The key theme in this area was that attention should be paid to equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure no group faces unequal opportunities for progression and

promotion (women and black, Asian and minority ethnic researchers were mentioned in particular). This should also not disadvantage those who prefer not to pursue promotion opportunities.

There was broad agreement that there should be clear, transparent and accessible promotion criteria available to researchers, with some mentioning that these could link to initiatives such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the Forum for Responsible Research Metrics. There was also some support for the creation of a national framework for research careers. Any promotion criteria should address the wider responsibilities and skillsets of researchers, beyond their research skills.

“Researchers engage in a wide range of activities, including, but not limited to teaching, public engagement, mentoring, peer review, collaboration with industry and knowledge exchange. Collaboration, multidisciplinary research, team science, openness and creativity are particularly important in the production of high quality research. These activities and skills are valuable to the career development of researchers. Promotion criteria should value these activities.”

Guidance, examples and case studies of good practice in this area would be welcome, but there is caution against being overly directive; many institutions already have specific promotion and progression pathways in place and institutions want freedom in how this might be implemented. Some also reiterated the role of funders in making provision for promotion and pay increases available within grants, to support institutional efforts.

“There is a conception that funders would not pay for a higher grade, and that bids would be ‘priced out’ if personnel costs are not kept down, which creates cadres of lower grade research staff, reliant on that funding for their positions, but with no room for progression.”

5.6.3 Mobility

As above, comments stressed the need for clear intended goals in ‘addressing mobility’, with clear definitions and the expectations/responsibilities for different stakeholders.

Many comments acknowledged the perceived dichotomy between the expectation of mobility and the retention of researchers; balancing the tensions between creating secure and stable employment for researchers and the fixed-term nature of grant funding and benefits to research and researchers of international and institutional mobility. On one hand, mobility is a beneficial aspect of the research environment that should be encouraged, but this needs to be balanced against the needs of the individual. The Concordat, therefore, could acknowledge the benefits of mobility, with consideration of modern definitions and ways of achieving mobility, such as through building partnerships and collaborations, short-term mobility (visits, secondments, conferences, placements), moving role or group within an institution, intersectoral mobility, interdisciplinary working, and ‘virtual’ mobility. Other types of mobility mentioned included, geographic, sectoral, disciplinary, and from fixed-term to continuing employment.

The relationship between mobility and progression was mentioned frequently, particularly in relation to EDI and the potential for less mobile groups to be disadvantaged in their career when mobility is essential for progression (e.g. those with caring responsibilities, health and disability needs, limited finances, or visa restrictions). Employers and funders should also commit to alleviating the financial burden of mobility, such as by providing relocation funding (not limited by duration of contract), covering the cost of visas, providing small grants for conference travel and short visits, providing expenses for job interviews, providing university-supported housing, flexible working and leave opportunities, encouraging more remote-working.

“One way of counteracting some of the detrimental effects of [mobility] is for HEIs to offer continuity of service for people joining from other HEIs, as we do here at [...]. We should also look at strategies to retain researchers, where possible. Some universities, for example, offer bridging funding between grants. However, such schemes rely on universities having sufficient resources to fund them.”

The Concordat should also recognise that researchers, as a frequently mobile population, need to be supported when they are an incoming as well as an outgoing member of the institution. For example, induction programmes, practical advice during the transition, and resources to support adapting to different working cultures should all be available.

A few respondents noted that changing expectations of mobility and availability of funding may need to be considered in the future, for example in light of any outcomes of Brexit, REF or any other policy or funding changes.

“Whilst we agree that the mobility of researchers should be addressed in the Concordat, we do feel that the focus of this is too narrow. The impact of relocation and support needed for individuals and families, should be addressed. Also, it should be acknowledged that it is not possible for everyone to be physically mobile and nor is it always necessary with technological advances. A more relevant focus should include: an openness to international partnership building; developing capabilities in working with others particularly with regard to diversity, collaborative endeavour, and inter/multi-disciplinarity; as well as basic global competence. We would like to see the revised Concordat broaden in scope to reflect these contemporary issues.”

“A realistic approach for the Concordat to take would be to acknowledge this expectation [of mobility], and the huge equality, diversity and inclusion issues it is known to create, and to instead ensure it emphasises that UK progression and promotion opportunities should not over-prioritise geographic mobility. The focus should always be on the experience of a candidate, not where it was gained or how frequently they have moved around.”

5.7 Communication and dissemination

Respondents stressed the importance of the main Concordat document being short, clear, and written in plain language. In addition, it should be as widely accessible as possible, in a flexible format, or range of formats, in terms of technology and presentation. Use of online, interactive technologies would improve accessibility for different audiences, through the innovative use of extracts, flexible presentation, and summaries or ‘lenses’ for each stakeholder group. Formats also require consideration from an accessibility (EDI) perspective, e.g. to enable access via screen reading software for visually impaired users. Some relevant guidance around accessibility can be found via the Office for Students⁴ and the UK Association for Accessible Formats⁵.

In addition to the use of clear and non-bureaucratic language, consistent and inclusive terminology should be used throughout. Respondents also commented on the need for the revised Concordat to be well-promoted, with an accessible web presence. “The Concordat” name does not easily lend itself to awareness raising outside of those already familiar with policy, however the importance of current brand awareness should not be overlooked.

Most comments around dissemination focused on practical ways to improve awareness among researchers and their PIs. There were a minority of comments (<10) suggesting that awareness-raising in itself should not be the focus, rather that researchers should be aware

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

⁵ <https://www.ukaaf.org/>

of the impacts. Without teeth to make a tangible difference, any dissemination efforts would be wasted. The suggestion was that researchers may be aware of the resulting initiatives and good practice, without necessarily needing to be aware of the Concordat itself.

“Increased exposure [to] and awareness of the principles of the Concordat should increase dialogue between researchers and their managers, [however] it should be noted that the lack of awareness should not mean that the individual does not experience the benefits of the embedded principles. Employers and PI should be implementing the principles into practice.”

Other themes emerging from the free-text comments were linked to specific suggested actions for either employers or funders. For example, employers could ensure all researchers are made aware of the Concordat at the earliest opportunity by promoting it through their recruitment campaigns, inductions and training, employment contracts, or even using an online quiz to check awareness and understanding, as is common practice with other HR initiatives.

Other suggestions included the addition of references to the Concordat and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)⁶ to job descriptions and performance reviews/appraisals for all relevant staff (including managers of researchers), and the provision of appropriate training for staff at all levels. This would ensure awareness of responsibilities and rights, as well as an understanding of their role in fostering a healthy research culture. It was noted by some that internal committees, forums and implementation groups could have stronger researcher representation and that the benefits of engaging with and implementing the Concordat Principles should be promoted to researchers and their managers.

Some recommended the establishment of a communications and implementation plan for promoting the revised Concordat, to be carried out on an annual basis to maintain a level of awareness and understanding among new researchers and staff and to aid momentum in embedding the Concordat Principles.

Employers could also take steps by appointing senior champions to own the Concordat implementation within their institution. In addition, they could be required to produce an annual statement of implementation against a Code of Practice for Researchers that aligns to the Concordat Principles. It was also suggested that funders could contribute to dissemination through reference to the Concordat within policies, guidance, applications, terms and conditions of funding and other relevant communications to prospective applicants and grant holders. Funders could align their funding process to the Principles of the Concordat, potentially linking the HR Excellence in Research Award to funding.

It was mentioned that larger funders are in a good position to raise the profile of the Concordat with their funded researchers, and that they should play a role in monitoring the implementation of the Concordat through grant reporting. Though it should be recognised that smaller funders may face challenges in terms of their charitable remit.

“As a funder, we will consider our role in making our awardees aware of the Concordat. This will include the addition of the Concordat within the terms and conditions of our grants, highlighting it to awardees when appropriate and ensuring a visible presence on our website. Additionally, we will make assessment panels aware of the revised Concordat.”

In general, it was felt that awareness of the Concordat could be raised by encouraging promotion and dissemination across all relevant sector bodies and Concordat signatories,

⁶ www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf

including Advance HE, UCEA, UCU, UKCGE, UKRI, UUK, Vitae, learned societies and professional bodies. In addition, it would be important to cross-link through other frameworks and policies, such as Athena Swan and REF, and to align the language and processes across these where possible.

5.8 Practice sharing

Overall, the comments addressed opportunities and barriers to identifying and disseminating good practice at a UK, institutional, department/group and individual researcher level, including better use of existing mechanisms and putting in new mechanisms.

New mechanisms for practice sharing include local, regional, and UK practice sharing events and forums, which would be welcomed by many, including those hosted by funders and other sector bodies, as well as linking into existing professional staff conferences (e.g. Advance HE, AGCAS, ARMA, UHR, and Vitae) and academic conferences. A dedicated online repository, blog or discussion forum was also seen as a useful way of keeping good practice examples up to date at a UK level; keeping them separate from a fixed published Concordat document. It was suggested that the good practice shared could then also cascade down to institution websites. A few comments noted the need to have opportunities (such as events) to share practice intersectorally.

“The Vitae website could be updated or re-created in a separate website which is entirely focused on the Concordat and which incorporates crisp, clear information, posters, podcasts etc. that can be used by institutions for their own internal promotions and communication.”

Researchers were seen as instrumental in highlighting good (and poor) practice across institutions, with UK, local and discipline-focused researcher networks, and representation on UK and institutional committees and steering groups being potential mechanisms; some institutions already have dedicated research staff liaison officers and postdoctoral societies for this purpose. Some respondents reiterated the need for researchers to be aware of the Concordat and the resulting good practice, which could be achieved through embedding the Concordat Principles into training and inductions, and through institutional and national awards linked to good practice, and to recognise the contribution of researchers.

Many respondents felt that ownership of the Concordat by senior champions is needed to drive the significant effort and culture change required to signal the importance across the institution, for example, by providing the dedicated resource needed to raise the profile of the Concordat and maintain activity, and ensure the Concordat is not a niche concern. This would also help with raising awareness among researchers and managers of researchers across the institution. Funders were also seen as having a key role to play in this through having a ‘career development planning for research staff’ section in grant reporting, or by providing funding similar to the previous ‘Roberts funding’.

There were a few comments highlighting the need for good practice to be contextualised and for a range of examples from different types and sizes of institution to be available. One respondent noted that it might be also be useful to learn from what hasn’t worked.

5.9 Ownership and governance

Overall the free-text comments revealed a strong response in favour of maintaining sector ownership through a UK representative group (i.e. the CSG or similar), and that this should include representation of the main stakeholder groups; funders, employers, PIs and researchers.

Other themes emerging included the need for any national group to have a diverse membership, both in terms of protected characteristics and the roles and organisations

included in the group. For example, comments referred to representation of a range of career stages (i.e. not only senior managers), different employer types (e.g. the NHS), and other sector bodies (including Advance HE, AGCAS, ARMA, HESA, UCU, UHR, UKCGE, and Vitae). At least 26 respondents specifically referred to the need to have a more balanced spread of institutions from different geographical regions and mission groups, including small and specialist institutions. A few comments suggested that members might be elected for a specific length of term.

“A review of the Concordat Strategy Group membership, as described in the Independent Review Report, to ensure all relevant Stakeholder groups are represented and to provide opportunities for institutional engagement with the CSG would support and facilitate full sector ownership.”

There were multiple comments (over 50 specific mentions), particularly from individuals, advocating for stronger researcher representation on the steering group, with specific reference to early career and fixed-term contract researchers. Some thought this might be best achieved through a researcher sub-committee that should have a diverse membership from HEI types and researcher roles, and which would inform the sector group. A few comments showed support for PGR involvement in this sub-committee.

“There should be representation of early career researchers on the steering group. These individuals should have buy-out for the time they spend working for the steering group, and they should be rotated (e.g. two-year appointments).”

“I also believe that there should be representatives [on the governance] for non-permanent academic staff, including postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers, teaching and support staff who do research, and technicians”

On the specific question of who the signatories of the Concordat should be, there was a very strong response in favour of allowing or requiring institutions to be signatories in their own right (Figure 5.17). Both individuals and organisations supported this overall, with only a small percentage disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. A few thought that the current model already works effectively, or could be improved by better communication, or that it would be unnecessarily burdensome to require institutions to be signatories.

“I would strongly advocate for individual universities to sign up to the Concordat in their own right and not hide behind Universities UK.”

“Having individual institutions as signatories is not, in our view, a wise or necessary step. This puts an extra complication in the way of institutions understanding and communicating their relationship to the Concordat.”

As to who has overall responsibility for and ownership of the Concordat, there were comments both from the perspective that UKRI or another UK body should be the ultimate driver of the agenda, and individual institutions must be the true owners in order to make progress on the ground. There were a few comments that all institutions should be committed to the Concordat and reporting on progress. It was also suggested that funders might produce an annual report on progress.

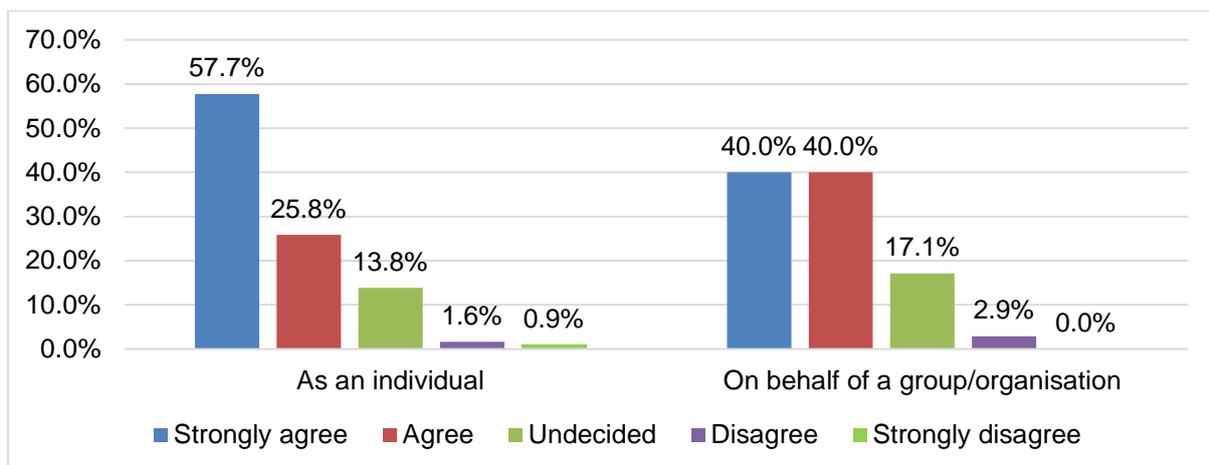
For institutions to achieve ownership, some suggested that they would need more robust internal processes, such as an internal representative group responsible for raising awareness, gathering evidence and reporting to the UK steering group; though many have similar structures in place already.

“Sector ownership is demonstrated by the Concordat Principles being embedded in university policies and practices, as recognised by HR EiR [Award].”

“Sector ownership doesn’t necessarily require Universities UK or UKRI to lead the Concordat, but endorsement and active involvement of these organisations would be highly valuable.”

“UKRI should own the Concordat and use it to influence funding and other strategic decision-making”

Figure 5.17 Individual institutions (as well as the representative bodies) should be invited to be signatories of the revised Concordat (N=531)



5.10 Reviewing progress

This section brings together responses to questions on the evaluation of implementation at an organisational and sector level, benchmarking of progress, and specifically, how useful the HR Excellence in Research Award is for evaluation and benchmarking.

5.10.1 Evaluation of implementation within organisations

From an organisational perspective, many of the comments described existing processes that are already being used to drive implementation and evaluation, such as regular (e.g. six monthly) internal reports, committees at different levels of the institution (faculty, school, etc.), research staff associations, staff surveys (e.g. the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS), Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS), and internal surveys) and steering groups reporting into the formal governance structures of the institution. All of which are being used to gather evidence for periodic self-assessments and external reviews as part of the HR Excellence in Research Award.

Recommended improvements to evaluation at an organisational level included having both more and less frequent review points for the HR Excellence in Research Award, and realignment of CROS, PIRLS, and the HR Excellence in Research Award to the Principles of the revised Concordat. Other suggestions included integrating evaluation into appraisals for managers of researchers, ensuring an institution’s Concordat aims feature in strategic plans and feed into responses to the REF, and taking a ‘continuous improvement approach’ to evaluation. Additionally, a few comments suggested that changing the name from HR Excellence in Research Award would be an opportunity to position the agenda as being of importance for the whole institution (not only ‘HR’) and raise the profile with researchers. A few respondents noted that the UK process for the Award (using the Concordat) was only available to Vitae member organisations.

“Change the name that labels it as an HR award – this is ambiguous, does not truly represent the aims of the Concordat and is consequently unhelpful”

“Take a continuous improvement approach. There is an impression that the action plan should be about new activities. However, it may be that maintaining good practice is valuable (and can be tough), as is trying something that fails but learning takes place. Taking risks in implementing innovative approaches to the Concordat should be encouraged and should be rewarded even if the innovation does not live up to initial expectations. This would engender creativity and a culture of continuous improvement. This would have the benefit of avoiding compliance becoming a tick box exercise.”

5.10.2 Evaluation of implementation as a sector

From a sector perspective, many comments again highlighted existing mechanisms that would allow evaluation of implementation, such as the CROS and PIRLS surveys and HR Excellence in Research Award action plans. Publishing sector-level analyses (particularly of action plans) and encouraging better uptake of surveys within and across institutions would increase the usefulness of these already valuable sources of data.

“Recommend introducing periodic reviews (every three to five years) of the Concordat to ensure language and principles remain relevant to sector. Recommend using the information collected through [HR] Excellence in Research [Award] process and surveys to review status of the Concordat in the sector.”

Annual reports of implementation, periodic reviews of the Concordat and closer links with REF were all suggested as potential improvements to sector-level evaluation, with the caution that monitoring should not require excessive additional effort. Survey fatigue and unnecessary duplication should be avoided where data can be collected to meet multiple purposes. Desk-based audits and spot checks were also suggested as mechanisms funders might engage to evaluate institutional compliance as part of their grant conditions and reviews.

It was noted that the outcome of Brexit could impact the UK eligibility for the HR Excellence in Research Award and this would need consideration alongside any decisions on the future evaluation of the Concordat implementation.

“Again, we support the continuation of the HR EiR (or similar process) across the UK HE sector. This should remain closely aligned with European expectations, regardless of the outcomes of Brexit, reflecting shared UK and EU values, developed over the last several decades, in supporting newer researchers. We would expect the Concordat Strategy Group to ensure that processes are in place to maintain UK standards for researcher development which are, at least, comparable to those set by the EU.”

“[Evaluation] could most helpfully be done through the REF to prevent duplication of evaluation and a clear tie-in with research funding.”

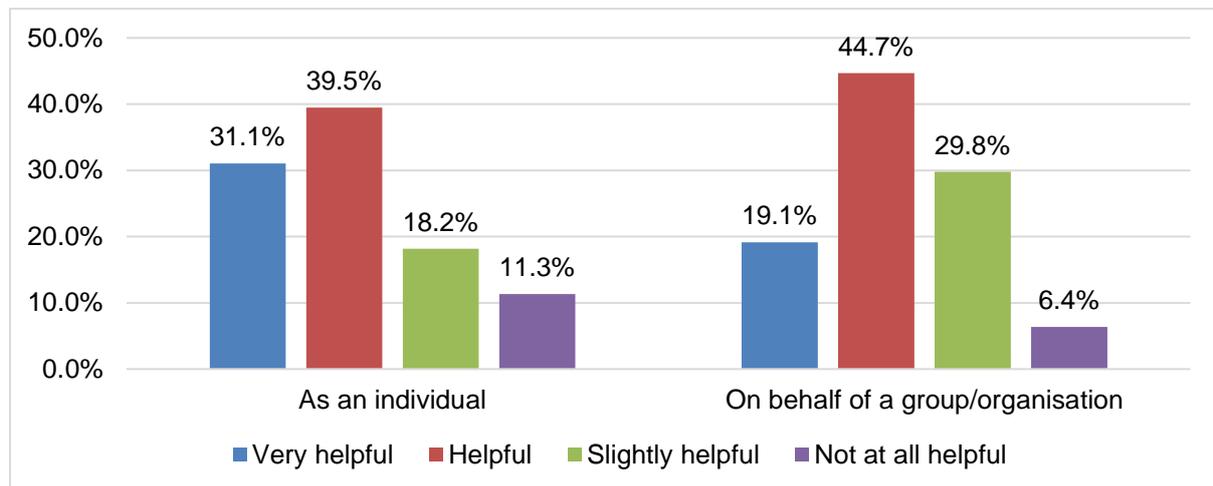
“We believe that publication of annual reports online by both institutions and funders is a comprehensive and appropriate level of evaluation and gives a sector view. The reports could be modelled on the Research Integrity Concordat reporting structure and could be reviewed as an action, for whichever body ultimately owns the Concordat, to produce an annual report to the sector on good practice.”

5.10.3 Benchmarking progress against others

Responses to this question reiterated some of the themes from above, that CROS, PIRLS and HR Excellence in Research Award action plans already provide a significant amount of data that could be used for benchmarking purposes, but may need some refinement, such as more structured template reporting processes for action plans and increasing participation rates of surveys (Figure 5.18).

Other (partially existing) information that could be used for benchmarking (if implemented) includes time allocation for personal development, career destinations, contract type and duration, routes to career progression, proportion of researchers on different contract types, contract type and progression rates by demographics and protected characteristics, length of service, researcher development per researcher or fraction of income (e.g. non-salary spend, numbers of staff), demographic overview of UK research staff population, uptake of appraisals, retention rates, quality and quantity of training available, percentage of research staff with a career development plan, evidence of support by PIs, and researcher satisfaction scores.

Figure 5.18 How helpful is it to be able to benchmark progress against others? (N=474)



Comments both in support of and cautioning against the use of metric-based benchmarking raised a number of caveats, including the need to have collectively agreed and responsible metrics, which would only be of use/or used when comparing against similar institutions (e.g. mission group, size, research intensity, discipline focus, stage of implementation). Similarly, on both sides of the argument, comments largely favoured a case study or qualitative approach, rather than the introduction of league tables that may lead to competition and undermine sharing of good practice. Alternative models suggested included a good practice repository drawn from HR Excellence in Research Award action plans, creating communities of interest around priority areas, and publishing institutional achievements.

“The collection of simple metrics of contract arrangement and uses of researchers across the sector is welcomed. Collecting trend data on the use of fixed-term contracts against permanent positions for researchers would be welcomed at our institution. Benchmarking institutional data against the sector would be useful, supporting organisations to evaluate institutional progress. Caution should be taken against developing formal metrics through, as the data collected should be used to inform institutions on progress rather for generating a league table ranking. The challenge with the analysis of this data is large variation exists for

the research population and activities between institutions; the contract types and numbers are likely to reflect this and would be challenging to capture with simple data comparisons.”

Other cautionary comments stressed the need to avoid unnecessary administrative burden, both by considering the value to cost ratio of any reporting and evidence gathering requirements, but also by aligning with other reporting and data exercises to avoid duplication of effort.

“While benchmarking internally might guide institutional development, external benchmarking would drive unwelcome behaviours and burdens, typically additional administration, ‘game-playing’, and distraction from research activity itself.”

“Harmonisation of existing actions plans which serve overlapping staff communities (HR EIR, Athena SWAN, Race Equality, Stonewall) to save time and to ensure consistency of messages and practice across agendas would be very helpful in benchmarking progress across the Institution.”

5.10.4 Using the HR Excellence in Research Award to support implementation

The majority of organisations were in agreement that the HR Excellence in Research Award was useful in supporting their implementation of the Concordat Principles, whereas there was a more mixed response from individuals with over 50% disagreeing (Figure 5.19).

“The strength in the current approach is the creative freedom that institutions have in implementing various locally appropriate interventions to enhance their research environments, enabling all institutions to engage with the Concordat’s agenda, regardless of their structures and resourcing.”

For organisations, HR Excellence in Research Award was seen as useful in gaining internal traction and allowing self-reflection and monitoring of progress (self-benchmarking). The Award was praised for its flexible and unbureaucratic approach (as compared to Athena Swan), although there were a few comments suggesting that Athena Swan had achieved a level of focus and traction that the Concordat had not. The comments from organisations also noted that there is low recognition of the Award by researchers, academics and prospective staff, limiting how successfully it is driving the agenda overall; again, the ‘HR’ name was mentioned as being particularly unhelpful in this regard.

“Again, there is an awareness issue around the Award and it isn’t immediately obvious that there is a connection between the Award and implementation of the Concordat and so requires really quite a detailed understanding of the agenda to make sense of the relationship. Having an award which is less about ‘HR’ would also position the entire agenda differently and may make it more palatable amongst the academic community.”

This lack of recognition by researchers was reinforced by the comments from individuals, many of whom skipped the question altogether, and others who simply stated that they didn’t know about the award or had seen no evidence of its usefulness (or otherwise). The comments also revealed a mistrust of HR departments by some researchers and a general scepticism of the power of awards to make any significant changes to the culture and experiences of researchers on the ground. Some would prefer sanctions for institutions not achieving minimum standards of good practice.

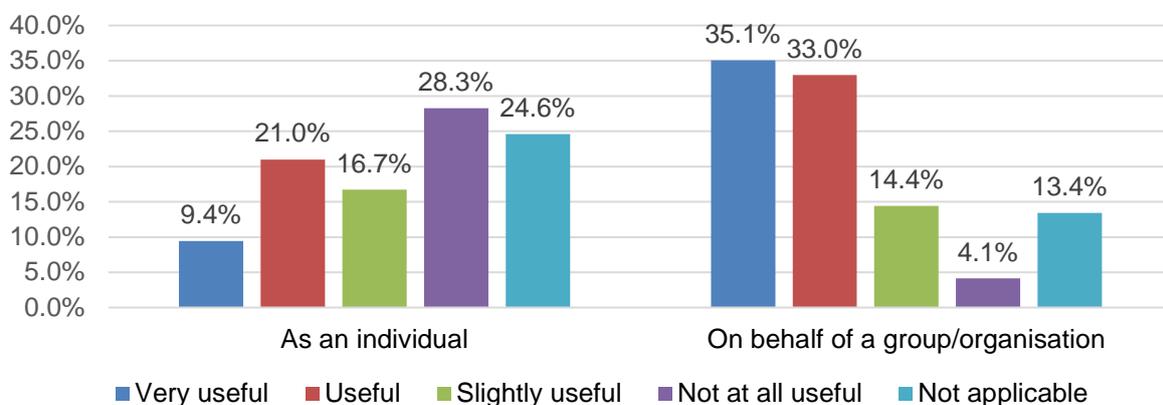
Comments from organisations regarding the introduction of a tiered/graded award (e.g. bronze, silver, gold) were equally in favour and opposed to this approach, where mentioned.

“We would not be in favour of a tiered award (e.g. Bronze, Silver, Gold) as it is [currently] effective in ensuring compliance and for the institution to set [their own] stretch targets beyond that.”

“Have a bronze/silver/gold award for compliance, which could potentially be tied to funding schemes.”

“If there were to be a change to a “gold, silver, bronze” model for HR EiR, such benchmarking should be based on clear, transparent and evidence-based criteria. As career pathways for researchers often lie outside of academia, it is essential for this evidence base to include research on researcher career development outside of the HE sector. The lack of a strong evidence base may make such a change premature. Development of a better evidence base might be the precursor to such a step.”

Figure 5.19 How useful is the HR Excellence in Research Award in supporting your implementation of the Concordat principles? (N=426)



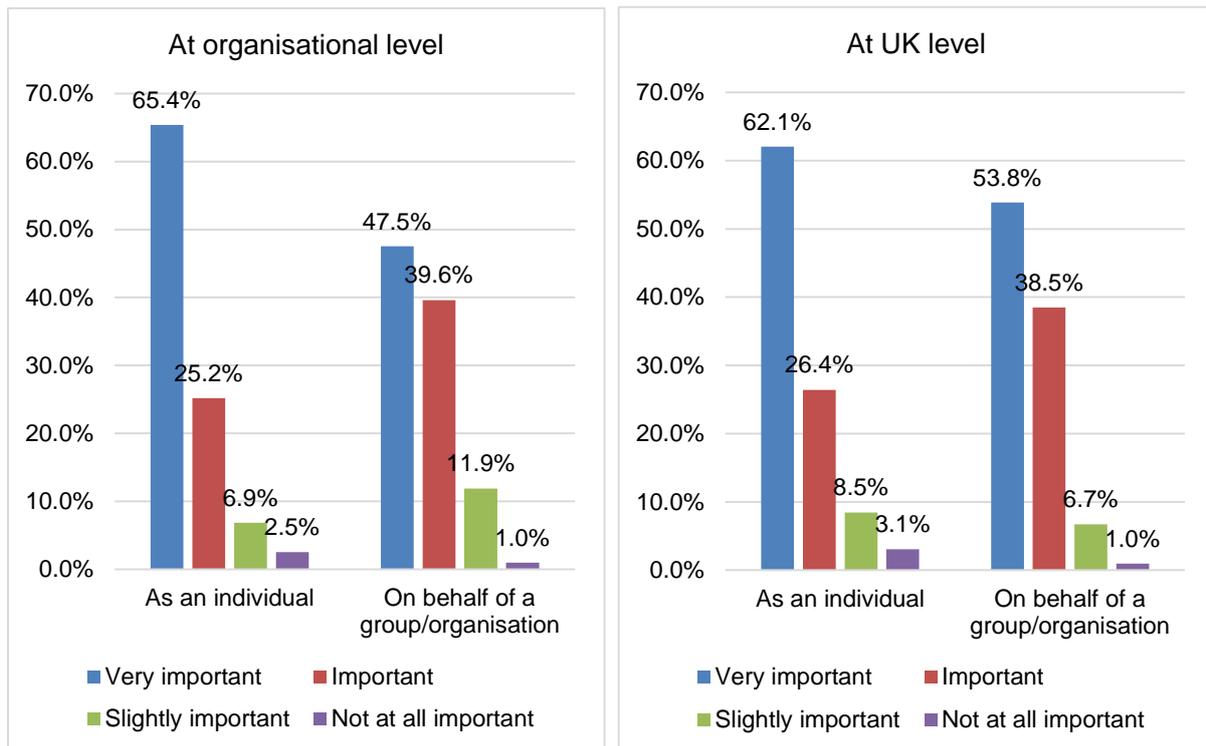
5.11 Tracking researchers’ careers

There was wide consensus that the collection of researcher career data at an organisational and UK level was important in terms of understanding researcher career paths and establishing the effectiveness and impact of the Concordat going forward.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response as demonstrated in Figure 5.20, there was broad acknowledgment that researcher career tracking is a difficult exercise and if data is to be available and useful at the UK level then a long-term, sector-wide, collective effort would be needed, supported by bodies such as UKRI, Vitae, HESA and HECSU. It was also recognised that the highly mobile nature of research contracts, including internationally and intersectorally, compounds the difficulties of data collection. Longitudinal tracking of researchers was identified as one of the most significant challenges, with tools such as ORCID, LinkedIn and National Insurance Numbers not being specifically tailored for this purpose. Several respondents suggested mandatory use of ORCID for future REF cycles as a potential mechanism to increase its usefulness for career tracking.

“We believe that meaningful, longitudinal data about the career destinations of researchers would be powerful in enabling us to ensure development meets their needs. However, neither institutional nor sector systems currently exist. Researchers are highly mobile, both within the UK and internationally. We must consider the challenge of collecting this data as a sector and not as individual organisations so that they do not lose their currency as research staff as they move between projects, organisations and sectors.”

Figure 5.20 How important is it that researcher career data is collected (N=494)



A number of existing sources of information could be utilised for the purpose of researcher career tracking, including exit surveys, professional development reviews/appraisals, CROS and PIRLS, HESA staff record and graduate outcomes returns, REF, ResearchFish, What do researchers do?, LEO, Athena Swan, HR Excellence in Research Award action plans and research staff alumni schemes.

“We believe it would be useful to collect data in terms of length of contracts, nationalities, gender, age, grade, timelines of careers, satisfaction levels and for all of these to be shared and compared across departments, across institutions and sectors.”

Refinement and harmonisation of these existing mechanisms was preferred by many to any new requirements, citing local resource challenges and the benefits of having a joined-up overview of data at the institutional level. Others mentioned that bespoke data collection and reporting would allow better consideration of EDI (e.g. in progression and promotion), reveal diverse career paths and provide useful qualitative data, which would underpin an evidence-based approach to researcher development policy and practice, in addition to driving implementation of the Concordat.

“The lack of such data impacts negatively on institutions’ ability to provide reliable and evidence-based support and guidance to researchers about their next move. Without a solid evidence base the UK HE sector is reliant on alumni, case studies and serendipity to guide researchers on their options”

“I think there is already an appreciation that short term contracts and lack of financial stability is not beneficial for helping an individual’s long-term career prospects but to have empirical data to back this up is incredibly powerful. It would be useful to see how long someone stays in research post-PhD and where they go next if they don’t stay in academia.”

It was evident from organisation comments that there are inconsistencies in the approach and extent to which data is currently collected on research staff as a distinct population; some are starting from the point of wanting to make best use of the significant amount of data they have, whereas others are currently not recording much or any relevant data. Another consideration noted for any future data collection exercise is GDPR, particularly in relation to tracking former staff.

A few respondents noted the Government's Industrial Strategy as an opportunity for the CSG to lobby for investment in national systems/surveys, and for funders to coordinate their data collection and reporting processes; although it was also noted that for smaller/charity funders this may be beyond their remit and/or capacity.

"The UK needs a systematic, national collection of data akin to the US model that would facilitate institutional planning for supporting our researcher community as well as to provide evidence-based information to researchers so that they make informed decisions about their career. Furthermore, this national, longitudinal data would enable institutions to better inform and train line managers for difficult conversations regarding career aspirations. The revised Concordat should also emphasise that a researcher's skill set is highly desired and transferable across sectors and that a career outside of academic or non-academic inside academia is no less prestigious."

"This data is important, as a primary but untracked research output by PIs is not papers, but the careers of the students and postdocs who have been in their labs. The Concordat could encourage increased usage of this as a research output."

6 Conclusions

Generally, respondents saw the revision of the Concordat as an opportunity to refresh the content so that it reflects how the research environment has changed since 2008 and to provide fresh impetus in driving the agenda forward through systemic change. For some it was seen as the start of a journey with the opportunity to link into wider UK agendas, such as the Government's Industrial Strategy and achieving 2.4% of GDP investment in research and innovation. The revision of the Concordat is also an opportunity to reflect the global context in which the UK is operating.

"Over 10 years it has become more and more challenging to demonstrate step-change against the principles of the Concordat, after lots of initial progress in investing in skills development and careers support, addressing HR issues and so on. A revised Concordat could re-set the bar and should be designed to support people in the changing world of research and of 21st century career options for researchers."

The majority of both individual and organisation responses agreed with the recommendations from the Independent Review of the Concordat, but there were important subtleties in that agreement which need to be taken into account in the revision. Foremost is the need for flexibility within the requirements of the Concordat that recognises the diversity of institutional contexts and research environments.

The need for flexibility is most apparent in the scale of implementation. Research-intensive institutions, including the Russell Group and many pre-1992 institutions, with large numbers of research staff were more likely to prefer the beneficiaries of the Concordat to be confined to research staff. Less research-intensive institutions were more likely to support opening up the Concordat to a wider constituency to include current academic staff who are building their research capacity. Flexibility also needs to be reflected in the responsibilities of funders, who represent a wide range of types of funders, such as, public sector funders, charities,

foundations, universities and companies, who will have differing missions and funding strategies.

6.1 Structure of the Concordat

There was strong support for structuring the Concordat around the responsibilities of the key stakeholder groups: funders, employers, managers of researchers and researchers. It was also recognised that many aspects of the Concordat are shared responsibilities and that these interdependencies need to be clearly articulated. The benefits for each group should be presented alongside the responsibilities. Additionally, the Concordat should recognise that individuals may have multiple responsibilities: research staff can also be principal investigators and manage other researchers; funders can also be employers.

The importance of flexibility came through in concerns relating to the language of the Concordat, particularly expressing the Concordat Principles in terms of overly prescriptive obligations: there was a strong preference for using expectations and outcomes so that institutions could translate these into their own contexts. It is also important that the Concordat uses inclusive language so that it speaks to all organisational contexts and disciplines. For example, the broader term 'managers of researchers' was preferred over the proxy term 'principal investigator', which is less commonly used in the social sciences, arts and humanities.

6.2 Concordat beneficiaries

There was a wide variety of views on who should be the beneficiaries for the Concordat, reflecting the diversity of respondents' circumstances. Overall there was strong agreement with the principle of inclusivity, with individual respondents tending to want more inclusivity than organisation responses. However, when looking at defining the specific populations to be included or excluded, there was less agreement. Generally, there was a significant proportion of research-intensive institutions that preferred the Concordat to maintain an exclusive focus on research staff. Less research-intensive institutions were more likely to prefer to include a wider definition of the beneficiaries for the Concordat or have the flexibility to do so.

It was widely acknowledged that teaching staff on limited contracts need similar support to research staff, but there was less enthusiasm for including them in the Concordat, with many suggesting a separate initiative. Similarly, the critical role of technicians in the research endeavour was recognised, but respondents cited the Technicians' Commitment as providing a similar vehicle as the Concordat for this group. Postgraduate researchers were seen as potential beneficiaries of Concordat activities but were not considered a primary beneficiary group.

Some of this concern about the Concordat beneficiaries was related to how to find resources to implement the Concordat Principles, particularly those relating to professional development opportunities. Overall, the Concordat needs to have a clear definition of the target group with the freedom for institutions to adapt to institutional contexts. A potential resolution is for the Concordat to have research staff as the primary beneficiary, with institutions having the flexibility to publicly include other populations appropriate to their institutional contexts and strategies.

6.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

There was overwhelming recognition of the need to create an inclusive research environment and provide support to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion in the Concordat. There was a desire to take a broad definition of EDI and move beyond the protected characteristics to include other diversity aspects, such as valuing all career options and reflecting all disciplines. Using the Concordat to create a supportive and healthy working

environment came through as a strong theme, with specific focus on wellbeing and mental health, bullying and harassment, and more supportive employment conditions, such as flexible working. This needs to include supporting the managers of researchers to understand and engage with EDI. As with other parts of the Concordat, this needs to link into existing legislation and frameworks to avoid duplication and bring coherence.

6.4 Professional development

The principle of research staff engaging in and taking ownership of their professional development was well supported, with recognition that this needs to in turn be supported by all stakeholders, including funders. There were differing views from organisations on whether the Concordat should specify that 20% of researcher's work time should be available for developing 'researcher identity and independence', including ten days' 'training allowance'. Although some praised this recommendation, particularly amongst the individual respondents, the main concerns regarding the '20%' proposal becoming a requirement of the Concordat were:

- How would it be resourced and funded? The expectation was that this would need to be funded by funders, not all of whom would be in a position or want to do so
- Would this apply to everyone falling within the Concordat, including institutionally defined populations? How would this sit with providing equality of opportunity for other staff?
- The risk of potentially reinforcing expectations of achieving research independence and devaluing other career choices
- Providing a clear definition and examples of what could be included within professional development is critical

Flexibility was also the byword in future requirements for professional development. Overall, specifying the amount of time that could be devoted to professional development was seen as overly prescriptive - although the ten days seemed significantly less problematic. Managers of researchers were identified as essential stakeholders in achieving cultural change around attitudes to, and engagement with, continuing professional development and they may also need support to facilitate this change.

6.5 Employment

Prearity of employment, promotion and progression opportunities were acknowledged as critical challenges for the research staff population. Unsurprisingly, individual respondents strongly supported the recommendation that the Concordat should address these, identifying lack of job security as the most important problem to solve. Organisation respondents identified precarity of employment, forced mobility and lack of progression as systemic issues, with funders having an important role in reducing the use of fixed term contracts through more flexibility in grant conditions. The role of managers of researchers in making and managing fixed-term contracts was also highlighted.

There was general agreement that research staff on fixed term contracts should have equality of opportunity for promotion and progression to other staff, with open and transparent processes and criteria. However, individuals commented on the lack of research-only (and teaching-only) pathways. The risk of the Concordat providing unintended messages in this area was highlighted, particularly of increasing expectations of long-term careers in academia, disadvantaging those who do not want to become group leaders and devaluing careers beyond academia.

A similar message came through with respect to mobility, with respondents highlighting that there are positive and negative aspects of mobility. Organisation and individual respondents encouraged employers and funders to alleviate the financial burden of mobility and provide

support for both ingoing and outgoing research staff. The Concordat should recognise both the benefits and disadvantages of (different types of) mobility, highlight the EDI implications, and identify different ways to achieve the advantages of mobility. This was an area of the Concordat where sharing examples of existing practice in retaining talent and experience, where possible, was seen as of value.

6.6 Communication, dissemination and practice sharing

There was broad agreement that the Concordat should be concise, written in plain language, accessible for different audiences, with consistent and clear terminology that works for all stakeholders. It should be linked with relevant legislation, other policies and frameworks, and updated regularly to keep it current. The Concordat should use interactive technology to improve accessibility, providing a 'lens' for each of the stakeholder groups.

The potential for practice sharing through a UK repository together with dedicated local and UK events were generally welcomed. Examples of contextualised practice that highlight the opportunities and barriers to help wider implementation were welcomed. The Concordat should also be promoted and disseminated by relevant sector bodies and through links into existing conferences and events. A majority commented on the challenge of and need to raise awareness with research staff and managers of research, although a few commented that research staff need to be aware of the impact and good practice rather than the Concordat itself. A few specifically mentioned the role of research staff associations in promoting the Concordat.

6.7 Governance

There was strong agreement that the Concordat should be owned by the sector, although little agreement as to where it should 'sit' with Universities UK, UKRI and Vitae being identified as possible homes. Similarly, the membership of the CSG should better reflect the four stakeholder groups, particularly with stronger research staff representation, possibly through a researcher sub-committee. At an institutional level there was strong support for senior management responsibility and championship of the Concordat to raise the profile of the Concordat internally. Respondents also noted the value of institutional committees to engage across the institution and report into institutional governance structures. Some organisation responses highlighted these as existing mechanisms. There was also strong support for individual organisations signing up to the Concordat, with a few respondents suggesting this was an unnecessary complication.

Organisation respondents recognised the value of reviewing progress at both the organisation and UK level, although there were mixed views about how this could best happen. Respondents highlighted the need for agreed, responsible metrics that recognise institutional and disciplinary contexts. Some stated concern about the potential administrative burden and called for the use for existing datasets. Embedding progress review into existing mechanisms, such as the REF and grant reporting processes was suggested by some. Contextualised benchmarking and practice sharing were seen as valuable, with CROS, PIRLS and the HR Excellence in Research Award all being mentioned, and it was suggested that they should be renewed to reflect the revised Concordat. Concern over the future of the Award post Brexit was raised and whether the name of the Award was helpful. There were mixed views about whether the HR Excellence in Research Award should be graded. Some respondents raised concerns about the potential use of league tables, preferring a qualitative case study approach which could take into account context and facilitate better practice sharing.

There was overwhelming support for having comprehensive data on researcher career paths at institutional and UK level, but also recognition that this was challenging to achieve. There was a clear call for the CSG, and particularly funders, to work collaboratively with institutions

and other relevant partners to set up a systematic UK process for tracking researcher career paths.

6.8 Next steps

The level of engagement with the consultation process and the thoughtfulness of responses reflect a high level of commitment to ensuring the future success of the Concordat. The consultation revealed a richness of views on how the Concordat should go forward: this data will be made publicly available in an anonymised and non-attributable form.

Following an open call and selection by members of the CSG, a Concordat Writing Group was formed in January 2019 to reflect the outcomes of the consultation in the revision of the Concordat. The membership of the Writing Group⁷ includes representatives from the four stakeholder groups: funders, employers, managers of researchers and researchers to provide a range of critical insights during the drafting process. The Group have been provided with summary data from the quantitative analysis and the themes emerging from the free text comments together with the free text comments organised by question.

Writing Group members have collaborated through face to face meetings and working remotely through a common platform to draft the initial Principles for the new Concordat. The draft is based on their collective interpretation of the outputs of the consultation analysis and informed by insights from the sector events. Following agreement by the CSG this draft will be shared with the sector. It is anticipated that a full draft of the revised Concordat will be available in May/June and the CSG will seek feedback from key stakeholder groups. The finalised Concordat is due to be published at the end of June.

The publication of the revised Concordat will be the beginning of the implementation process, which will include a communications strategy to raise awareness of the Concordat, particularly with researchers and managers of researchers. The CSG has taken the feedback on governance, ownership and monitoring process, and is currently exploring a range of options.

“The Concordat can play a role in changing the course of employment and the entire research and innovation ecosystem by focusing and rewarding the creation of stable employment conditions and genuine career paths through the structuring of grants and the oversight of institutions as employers. Ten years on from the original Concordat, when so much that is fundamental to the employment of researchers has NOT changed, it would be a disgrace for the sector to miss this opportunity to create a document that can help drive real change.”

⁷ www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers/concordat-writing-group

Appendix 1. Consultation survey questions

*** 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information above and agree to take part in the consultation**

Yes; No

*** 2. Are you responding**

As an individual?

On behalf of a group/organisation?

3. What is your job title?

*** 4. Which best describes your current role?**

Postgraduate researcher (studying for a doctorate)

Research staff (e.g. postdoctoral researcher, research fellow)

Technician or technical/software specialist

Academic staff

Principal investigator (e.g. research group leader, with responsibility for managing researchers)

Teaching staff on limited contract (e.g. teaching fellow, sessional lecturer)

Professional staff supporting researchers/research (e.g. researcher developer, research support officer, careers professional)

Professional staff with responsibility for human resources

Senior manager (e.g. head of department/faculty/school, dean, pro-vice-chancellor)

Funding/grant manager

Other (please specify)

*** 5. Are you employed by a**

Higher education institution

Research institute

Department or research group

Research funder

Learned society/subject association/academy

Public sector organisation

Organisation representing researchers

Charity

Business

Other (please specify)

6. What is the name of your organisation?

7. What is your job title?

*** 8. Is your response on behalf of a**

Higher education institution

Research institute

Department or research group

Research funder

Learned society/subject association/academy

Public sector organisation

Organisation representing researchers

Charity

Business

Other (please specify)

9. Please provide the name of your group or organisation

10. Please provide any further information that will help contextualise your response

The Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers recommends that a revised Concordat has a continued role to play in improving the career development of researchers (Recommendations 1, 11, 12 of the review report). The following questions address the usefulness and purpose of a revised Concordat.

11. The review highlighted that the existing Concordat has had some impact in driving cultural change. What in your view would make the revised Concordat more effective? What are the opportunities and challenges (within your organisation/across the sector) in implementing the Concordat?

The Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers recommends that its structure is revised to include specific principles, obligations and good practice to apply to researchers, principal investigators, employers, and funders (Recommendations 6, 13). An example of this proposed revised structure is given in Annex 2 (pp 20-28).

12. In general, do you support the proposed structure of the revised Concordat to include:

Principles - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Obligations - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Examples of good practice - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

13. In general, do you support the structure segmented by these different groups?

Researchers - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Principal investigators - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Employers - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Funders - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

14. How can the structure or format of a revised Concordat improve accessibility and use by researchers, PIs, employers and funders?

The Concordat review recommends that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) should be integrated throughout a revised Concordat, as well as retaining a specific (update) EDI principle (Recommendation 7)

15. How can the revised Concordat best facilitate equality and diversity in the research environment and create a more diverse and inclusive research culture?

The Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers recommends that its reach should be extended to include all institutional staff engaged in research, while keeping the primary focus as research staff (Recommendation 2). The proposed new definition would include all staff who are research active (whether or not primarily hired as researchers), such as postdoctoral researchers, research assistants and associates, research fellows, technicians, and 'hidden researchers' (e.g. teaching fellows, hourly paid teaching staff who are research active). Audience Concordat Consultation, October 2018

16. Do you agree with the recommendation to explicitly broaden the definition of 'researchers' to include all staff engaged in research?

Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

17. Please explain your answer (you may wish to consider opportunities/challenges, consistency of definition, inclusivity, and specific target audiences).

18. Are there any groups that should be specifically excluded from the Concordat definition of 'researchers'? (select all that apply)

Postgraduate researchers (studying for doctorate)

Teaching staff (e.g. teaching fellow, sessional/visiting lecturer)

Academic staff (e.g. lecturer, senior lecturer, assistant/associate professor)

Principal investigators, research group leaders (with responsibility for managing research staff)

Technicians or technical/software specialists

Professional/support staff who research

Senior staff who research

Researchers employed outside of academia

Other (please specify)

The Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers recommends that there should be increased support for researchers to develop their career and research identity, proposing allocation of 20% of a researchers' time, including '10 days' training allowance' (Recommendation 4) to further their career opportunities in any employment sector.

19. In principle, there should be increased support for researchers to develop their career and research identity

Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

20. How should the Concordat support researchers to develop their career and research identity?

Funders place "increased emphasis and support on uptake of 10 days' training" - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

Employers place "increased emphasis and support on uptake of 10 days' training" - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

"Allocated time within grants for developing researcher independence" - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

"20% of a researcher's time allowed for developing independent research and skills" - Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

21. Please provide some context to your answers to Q15 and Q16. How can these be implemented? What are the barriers? What additional factors and alternative models should be considered?

The Review highlights the prevalence of fixed term contracts, the need to be mobile and a lack of progression and promotion opportunities for research staff (Recommendation 5).

22. The revised Concordat should address the use of fixed term contracts for researchers

- Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

23. Please provide some commentary to explain your answer to Q18. If the revised Concordat should address the use of fixed term contracts, how should it do this? What alternative models and existing good practice should be considered?

24. The revised Concordat should address the progression and promotion opportunities for researchers

- Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

25. Please provide some commentary to explain your answer to Q20. If the revised Concordat should address progression and promotion, how should it do this? What alternative models and existing good practice should be considered?

26. The revised Concordat should address the expectation of mobility for researchers

- Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

27. Please provide some commentary to explain your answer to Q22. If the revised Concordat should address mobility, how should it do this? What alternative models and existing good practice should be considered?

The Review highlights that all researchers and signatories should be aware of the Concordat (Recommendation 8).

28. What is the most effective way of ensuring all relevant audiences are aware of the Concordat?

The Review encourages the sharing of good practice across the HE sector and learning from other employment sectors (Recommendations 3, 5).

29. What should happen to encourage and facilitate sharing good practice within your organisation?

30. What should happen to encourage and facilitate sharing good practice across the HE sector or learning from other sectors?

The Review recommends that the Concordat must continue to be owned by the HE sector overseen by a representative steering group (currently performed by the Concordat Strategy Group) (Recommendation 10).

31. How can continued sector ownership be best achieved? Who should be represented? What does true sector ownership look like?

Currently, representative groups (e.g. Universities UK, Guild HE, Russell Group) are Concordat signatories on behalf of the individual institutions.

32. Individual institutions (as well as the representative bodies) should be invited to be signatories of the revised Concordat

- Strongly agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; Strongly disagree

The Review highlights the importance of reviewing sector progress in implementing the Concordat Principles (Recommendations 9, 14, 15) and recommends a review of the HR Excellence in Research Award, and any other relevant awards, to ensure it remains relevant and accessible as a driver of change (Recommendations 14, 15).

33. How should the implementation of the Concordat Principles be evaluated within your organisation?

34. How should implementation of the Concordat Principles be evaluated as a sector?

35. How helpful is it to be able to benchmark progress against others?

Very helpful; Helpful; Slightly helpful; Not at all helpful

36. Please describe what approaches would be more helpful. Which aspects of the Concordat would be most valuable to benchmark?

37. How useful is the HR Excellence in Research Award in supporting your implementation of the Concordat Principles?

- Very useful; Useful; Slightly useful; Not at all useful; Not applicable

38. What approaches, models, or awards should be considered to support benchmarking and implementation?

39. How important is it that researcher career data is collected at an

Organisational level - Very important; Important; Slightly important; Not at all important

UK level - Very important; Important; Slightly important; Not at all important

40. Please explain your answer (you may wish to describe what data you already collect, what would facilitate better collection and sharing of data, what the challenges are, existing models, and innovative approaches).

Please take this opportunity to raise any other comments, ideas, or thoughts on how the sector should better support the development of early career researchers, whether via the Concordat or a different route.

41. Any other comments

42. We may want to follow up on your response or use an attributed quote. Please provide your email address if you agree we can contact you.

Appendix 2. Overview of respondents and participants

Russell Group institutions

Organisation	Individual responses	Group responses	Representation at consultation events
Cardiff University	6	1	Yes
Durham University	7	1	
Imperial College London	4	1	Yes
King's College London	6	2	Yes
London School of Economics and Political Science	1	1	
Newcastle University	7	1	Yes
Queen Mary University of London	3	1	Yes
Queen's University Belfast	3	1	
University College London	10	1	Yes
University of Birmingham	18	1	
University of Bristol	4		Yes
University of Cambridge	6	3	Yes
University of Edinburgh	11	2	Yes
University of Exeter	4	1	
University of Glasgow	4	1	
University of Leeds	8	1	
University of Liverpool	1	1	
University of Manchester	9	1	
University of Nottingham	21	1	Yes
University of Oxford	25	3	Yes
University of Sheffield	7	2	
University of Southampton	11	1	
University of Warwick	6		
University of York	15	7	Yes

Pre-1992 institutions

Organisation	Individual responses	Group responses	Representation at consultation events
Aberystwyth University	1		
Bangor University	1		
Brunel University London	3	1	Yes
City, University of London	5		Yes
Cranfield University		1	
Glasgow School of Art			Yes

Goldsmiths, University of London	1		Yes
Harper Adams University		1	
Heriot-Watt University	4	1	Yes
Keele University	8	1	
Lancaster University	6	1	
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	1		Yes
Loughborough University	1	1	
Royal Holloway, University of London	3		
SOAS University of London	1		Yes
Swansea University	5		
The Open University		1	
The Royal Veterinary College	1		
Ulster University	3	1	
University of Aberdeen	3	1	
University of Bath	23	1	Yes
University of Bradford	4	2	Yes
University of Dundee	7	1	
University of East Anglia	5	1	
University of Hull	2	1	Yes
University of Kent	3	1	
University of Leicester	2	1	
University of Reading	2	1	
University of Salford		1	Yes
University of St Andrews	5	1	
University of Stirling	16	1	Yes
University of Strathclyde		2	Yes
University of Surrey	1	2	
University of Sussex	3		Yes
University of Wales	1		
University of Wales Trinity St David	1		

Post-1992 institutions

Organisation	Individual responses	Group responses	Representation at consultation events
Abertay University		1	
Anglia Ruskin University	8	1	
Bath Spa University		1	Yes
Birkbeck, University of London	2	1	
Birmingham City University	1		

Bishop Grosseteste University		1	
Bournemouth University	1		
Cardiff Metropolitan University		1	
Coventry University	2		Yes
De Montfort University			Yes
Edge Hill University		1	Yes
Edinburgh Napier University	6	2	Yes
Falmouth University	1		
Glasgow Caledonian University	2	3	Yes
Glyndwr University		1	
Kingston University	1		
Leeds Arts University		2	
Leeds Beckett University			Yes
Liverpool John Moores University	3	1	
London South Bank University	1		
Manchester Metropolitan University	2	1	Yes
Middlesex University	1		
Northumbria University	4		
Nottingham Trent University	5		Yes
Oxford Brookes University	2	1	
Queen Margaret University		1	Yes
Robert Gordon University		1	Yes
Royal Agricultural University	1		
Sheffield Hallam University	4		
Solent University	1		Yes
St Mary's University	1		
Staffordshire University		1	
Teesside University	4	1	Yes
University of Lincoln	1	1	
University of Brighton	3	1	Yes
University of Central Lancashire	2		Yes
University of Chester	4	1	
University of Cumbria	1	3	Yes
University of Derby	2		Yes
University of Gloucestershire	2		
University of Greenwich	7	1	
University of Hertfordshire	5	1	
University of Huddersfield	4	1	Yes
University of Northampton	1		
University of Plymouth	1	1	
University of Portsmouth	5		Yes

University of South Wales		1	Yes
University of the Highlands and Islands	1		
University of the West of England	2	1	
University of the West of Scotland		1	Yes
University of Westminster	1		
University of Winchester	1		
University of Wolverhampton	2	1	
University of Worcester		2	Yes
York St John University	1		

International organisations

Organisation	Individual responses	Group responses	Representation at consultation events
BVDU	1		
Development Education and Advocacy Resources for Africa (DEAR Africa)	1		
Fundación Barrié	1		
Sun Yat-sen University	1		
Trinity College Dublin	1		
University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia	1		
Waterford Institute of Technology	1		

Other groups and organisations

Organisation	Individual responses	Group responses	Representation at consultation events
Advance HE			Yes
AGCAS		1	
Arts and Humanities Research Council, UKRI	1		
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, UKRI		1	
British Antarctic Survey	2		
British Pharmacological Society		1	
Cambridge Insights	1		
Cancer Research UK	1	1	
Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland			Yes
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology			Yes

Chronically Academic		1	
Connected Communities Programme		2	
GSM London	1		
CSL Behring	1		
Daphne Jackson Trust	1	1	
Enterprise Educators UK		1	
GuildHE		1	Yes
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales			Yes
JISC		1	
Knowledge Transfer Network	1		
Medical Research Council, UKRI			Yes
MY Consultants Ltd		1	
National Trust Scotland	1		
NHS	1		
NIHR Academy		1	
Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit		1	
Powertrain and Vehicle Research Centre	1		
Remmi Research CIC		1	
Research and Enterprise Services		1	
Research Career Development Group (RCaD)		1	
Researchers 14		1	
Royal Society of Chemistry			Yes
Salterns trust	1		
Science Council			Yes
Scottish Funding Council			Yes
Scottish Universities Physics Alliance		1	Yes
South East Researcher Developers forum (SERD)		1	
The Alan Turing Institute			Yes
The British Academy		1	Yes
The Dunhill Medical Trust			Yes
The Francis Crick Institute	1		
The Institute of Cancer Research		1	
The Physiological society		1	
The Royal Academy of Engineering		1	
The Royal Society			Yes
The University and College Union		1	

UK Council for Graduate Education		1	
UKRI Science & Technology Facility Council	1		Yes
Universities Scotland		1	
University College of Estate Management	1		
Vivomotion	1		