

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	Oxford Brookes University (OBU)
Reporting period	2023 – 2024 (Report covers April 2023 to March 2024). Approved by Concordat Working Group – 18 th April 2024.
Date approved by governing body	Approved by University RKEC - 14 th May 2024
Date published online	By July 2024
Web address of annual report	https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Concordat-to-Support-Researchers
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Concordat-to-Support-Researchers
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Professor Susan Brooks, Director of Researcher Development, sbrooks@brookes.ac.uk
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	16 th May 2024

Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers (*max 500 words*)

As outlined in our institutional “Code of Practice for the Career Management of Contract Researchers”, our Research-Only Staff are regarded as full members of academic staff, and are afforded the same consideration as all other comparable employees in relation to the day-to-day life of their Faculty and Department. Researchers are formally represented on Faculty and University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committees (RKEC), and on University Academic Board. In addition, Researcher Representatives from each Faculty are valued members of the Concordat Working Group, to ensure that our Researchers’ collective voice is heard and their opinions and feedback are incorporated into University policy and action plans.

Researchers undertake Personal Development Review (PDR), an annual appraisal in which the Researcher identifies and agrees work objectives and training needs for the coming year with their line manager and discusses longer-term career aspirations.

This includes access to training, e.g. mandatory University Research & Knowledge Exchange Training (Induction; Navigating Ethics; Data Management; Applying for and Managing External Research Grants; Research Integrity) as well as an array of additional training, e.g. Intellectual Property; Commercialisation; Public Engagement; Impact; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI); Leadership, etc. Researchers can also request access to Staff Development Funds to support attendance at external conferences and professional networking events.

Research-Only Staff have access to careers-specific training (e.g. applying for jobs; preparing for interview) and 1 to 1 advice of the Careers Centre, to discuss career options both within and beyond academia.

The University additionally hosts a biennial Researcher Career Pathways Event, which puts a spotlight on the personal career journeys of researchers who have gone on to have a range of diverse and interesting careers post-PhD, within academia and beyond.

Research-Only Staff can also access the University Research Staff Mentoring Scheme to support career development conversations with a more experienced

academic from outside of their immediate Faculty. This can include working towards applications for promotion.

The University is committed to providing good working conditions, training and career development opportunities for all. It has held the HR Excellence in Research Award since 2012 and became an official signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in May 2020. The University is committed to advancing gender equality, representation and progression for all staff, across all disciplines and roles. OBU has engaged with the Athena Swan Charter since 2009, achieving a first institutional Bronze award in 2013. OBU achieved a Stonewall Gold Award 2023 as LGBTQ+ Inclusive Employer. The University has formally signed up to the Race Equality Charter and is working towards its first award, with Researcher representation on its Steering Group.

The University is committed to establishing suitable roles for staff who are on fixed-term contracts that are coming to an end, wherever possible, through its redeployment scheme, which attempts to match staff to vacancies arising, before these roles are sent to external advert.

Wherever possible, departments take excellent contract researchers into permanent academic positions. During 22/23, three Contract Researchers were recruited into salaried academic roles as Lecturer or Senior Lecturer.

(500 words)

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success
(max 600 words)

Environment and culture:

Employing the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) for benchmarking new initiatives and evaluating progress

As planned, we engaged in CEDARS 2023 and will participate biennially thereafter. We will use data from our first CEDARS completion to establish our baseline position, in order to plan developments going forward. We aimed to achieve a 50% engagement in CEDARS from our researchers (based on 51% response rate to CROS 2019) and an initial 35% engagement rate from Managers of Researchers in 2023, with the intention of building engagement in CEDARS 2025 and subsequently.

An action plan, in response to CEDARS 2023 data, is outlined below.

Establishment of a Research-only Staff Network

In response to researcher feedback in focus groups, we have established a new Research-only Staff Network to facilitate their communication, peer group discussion and support. As this is a new initiative, we will support researchers to set up meetings, and support researchers to develop the network as they require, and in response to their feedback going forward. An evaluation of the usefulness and function of the Network was carried out in 22/23 and will be carried out again at year end, 23/24.

Employment:

Improving annual appraisal and career-focussed and professional development discussions for researchers

Since becoming a signatory to the revised Concordat, a key focus has been to improve the uptake and usefulness of annual appraisal (Performance and Development Review - PDR). In particular, we wish to promote PDR as a framework for supporting career-focussed discussions between researcher and their manager, planning 10 days training and professional development (pro rata, per annum), and discussing and agreeing strategies through which the researcher can develop an independent research identity, in line with key Concordat obligations. Our new training bundle for Managers of Researchers and separate bundle introduced this year for Researchers, both have a strong emphasis on guidance for effective PDR.

We will now monitor uptake and perceived usefulness of PDR by researchers, with a view to developing further actions if necessary. Specific success measures include an increase in researchers reporting that they had 'participated in appraisal/review'

from 60% (CROS 2019) to 80% in CEDARS 2023/2025, and 70% of researchers reporting staff review/appraisal was 'useful/very useful' in CEDARS 2023, rising to 75% in CEDARS 2025.

Professional Development of Researchers:

New training bundles for 1) Managers of Researchers and 2) Research-Only Staff

A key element of our strategy is the development of a new training package and resource issued to all Managers of Researchers, from April 22 onwards, and development of a new training package and resource issued to all Researchers, by July 2023. Bundles highlight key university and external frameworks and policies; signpost to key resources and training, and provide top tips and advice. Success measures include: improvement, by 5-10%, in the proportion of researchers reporting having knowledge and understanding of e.g. the Concordat, HR Excellence, etc. in CEDARS 2023 and 2025, in comparison to our CROS 2019 scores, in addition to success measures related to PDR stated previously.

Further development and evaluation of University Research & KE Training as part of our umbrella programme (EXPLORE@Brookes) and expansion of researcher support

Evaluation (including ratings of usefulness and the extent to which the session meets its purpose) is requested after each individual event in the University Research & KE Training programme and is particularly helpful when introducing a brand new event, to shape it going forward, e.g. Time Management for Researchers, evaluated this reporting year.

Please see full **Concordat Institutional Action Plan** – Feb 2021

(<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Concordat-to-Support-Researchers>) and **HR Excellence in Research Award 2022-2025 Action Plan**

(<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/HR-Excellence-in-Research>) for further details.

(600 words)

Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/Pis); Researchers]

<p>Environment and Culture (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution:</p> <p>CEDARS 2023 – CEDARS was open at OBU for 12 weeks. We achieved an overall response rate of 50% (79/157), in line with our 51% target.</p> <p>Research-Only Staff Induction training bundle established – On-demand bite-sized training and resources to support Researchers to meet their Concordat obligations, developed and rolled out to all current Research-Only Staff in March 2023 and to all new Research-Only Staff on a monthly basis going forward.</p> <p><u>Content:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Practice for the Career Management of Contract Research Staff • Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers • External Research Governance – 1 minute videos for busy Researchers: Athena SWAN; Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research; Concordat on Open Research Data; Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers; Concordat to Support Research Integrity; DORA and Responsible Metrics; HR Excellence in Research Award; Knowledge Exchange Concordat; Narrative CV; R&D People & Culture Strategy; Race Equality Charter • How Mentoring can help • How to Make the Most of your Performance and Development Review (PDR) • Making the most of a Fixed-Term Research Contract • Mental Health & Wellbeing for Researchers • Signposting Training for Researchers • Taking Ownership of your Career Development • Top Tips for Networking <p>The bundle will be evaluated over the next year.</p>
---	---

Academic Managers of Researchers:

Managers of Researchers Training bundle 22/23 evaluation -

The survey was open for 7 weeks, July to August 2023. N=18 which represents a 31% response rate (18/58).

Managers rated the average usefulness of content in relation to their Concordat responsibilities as a Manager of Researchers 4.2 out of 5, on a scale where 1 is not at all useful and 5 is very useful. Managers rated the average usefulness of the training package for new Managers of Researchers 4.2 out of 5 and 4.1 out of 5 as a refresher/reminder for established/senior Managers of Researchers.

One Manager said this of the training package: *"I thought this was really good in acknowledging that we as academics aren't always trained to be managers, or see ourselves as such - that's often assumed, but not spelled out. It's great also to be clear about how far we've come since the 1990s, in terms of the respect we show researchers, especially in terms as their rights as full-integrated members of staff and as valued members of our team."*

Managers voted to keep the format as light touch, on demand, bite-sized videos.

Feedback from Managers is constructive and useful. Suggestions on providing more meaningful structure and order to contents and developing new resources for Managers will be progressed over the next year.

Researchers:

Research-Only Staff Network 22/23 evaluation - Open for 6 weeks, June to July 2023. Contract Researchers reviewed the usefulness and function of the Research-Only Staff Network. N=11 responses (11/103 = 11% response rate). Hot on the heels of CEDARS, survey fatigue may have contributed to the low response rate. We will therefore repeat this evaluation a

	<p>year later, summer 23/24. The key benefits of the Research-Only Staff Network were cited by Researchers as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Researchers from across the University in different disciplines (89%) • Opportunity to network (78%) • Peer support (67%) • A chance to ask questions (67%) • Opportunity for future collaboration (56%) <p>80% of our Researchers agreed that the Research-Only Staff Network helped with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence • Morale • Reduced sense of working in isolation <p>Researchers voted for their preferred format (alternating between in person and online) and frequency (monthly – Oct to Jun) of future meetings. Following suggestions from Research-Only Staff, the 23/24 Network programme includes themed sessions with internal guest speakers who will lead discussions, with the aim of improving attendance and engagement with the Network in 23/24.</p> <p><i>(598 words)</i></p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution:</p> <p>Review of Fixed-Term Contracts – During 22/23, the Strategic People Partners (People Directorate) completed a review of Research-Only Staff on Fixed-Term Contracts with the relevant managers and moved any to permanent contracts where there is sufficient certainty about future funding.</p> <p>Review of Recruitment & Selection - The People Directorate is in the final stages of a comprehensive review of recruitment</p>

and selection processes at OBU. Outcomes will include a new recruitment and selection policy. Concurrently, the application process is being examined, including an assessment of advertising media. This evaluation aims to ensure that institutional recruitment practices remain not only robust but also effective in attracting top-tier talent, within a competitive market.

5 years of EDI data on recruitment and promotions of Research-Only Staff (17/18 to 21/22) was reviewed by the Concordat Working Group, who put forward a number of suggestions for the EDI Team to consider as part of their planned work to pinpoint and address any inequalities.

Academic Managers of Researchers:

CEDARS 2023 – We achieved an excellent response rate to CEDARS 2023 from our “Established & Senior Staff” of 64% (41/64). In its first year, our initial target for Managers was 35%, so 64% is significantly better than anticipated.

100% of Established and Senior Staff recruited at OBU in the last 2 years, who responded to CEDARS, reported that they either “Agree” or “Agree strongly” that the University’s recruitment, selection and appointment process is fair, inclusive, transparent and merit-based.

Established and Senior Staff at OBU were more likely to either “Agree” or “Agree strongly” with all statements in the section on institutional standards, compared to the sector average, including: Recognition for contributions; Standards of research integrity and conduct; Clear expectations in local working environment; Commitment to equality and diversity; Promotion of/support for good mental health and wellbeing.

The percentage of OBU Established and Senior Staff who reported that they either “Agree” or “Agree strongly” was higher than the sector average for all statements in the section on recognition and wellbeing, including: Good level of job satisfaction; Feeling valued at work; Manager promoting good work-life balance; Feeling included in

immediate research environment/group; Encouraged to maintain good mental health and wellbeing.

Researchers:

CEDARS 2023 - 32% of OBU Research Staff completed CEDARS 2023 (30/93). Our HR Excellence target was 50%, so this is lower than anticipated.

87% of OBU Research Staff who responded to CEDARS reported that they had undertaken staff appraisal/development review within the last two years. This is notably higher than the sector average (69%) and higher than that last reported by OBU Researchers at CROS 2019 (60%). It is also higher than our HR Excellence target of 80% for CEDARS 2023. 87% of OBU Research Staff undertaking Performance and Development Review (PDR) also brings the figure in line with the percentage of OBU Established and Senior Staff who reported that they had undertaken PDR at CEDARS 2023 (88%).

OBU Researchers also rated PDR to be more useful than Research Staff in the sector average (77% rated it as useful or very useful; compared to 61% sector average). This figure is also above our HR Excellence target of 70% for CEDARS 2023.

100% of Research Staff recruited in the last 2 years, who responded to CEDARS 2023, reported that the institution's recruitment, selection and appointment process was both fair and merit-based.

OBU Research Staff were more likely to "Agree" and "Agree strongly" with all statements in the sections on Bullying and Harassment and Research Integrity, compared to sector averages, including: Familiarity with reporting mechanisms; Feeling comfortable to report an incident; Trust in the institution to investigate fairly/take appropriate action.

(600 words)

<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution:</p> <p>Research Leadership Coaching – The University made a People and Culture Award, for Research Leadership Coaching with an external Coach during 22/23. 100% of applicants were successful. 7 awards were made to Managers of Researchers, as a thank you for their managerial/leadership role and a chance to explore their leadership skills further with an external Coach. 7 awards were made to Research-Only Staff, in line with the University’s Concordat commitment to support Researchers in developing their sense of research identity and research leadership skills. An evaluation was carried out over a month between June and July 2023.</p> <p>Time Management for Researchers – The University Research & KE Training programme introduced a new training session on “Time Management for Researchers” in 22/23. Feedback was evaluated in summer 2023. Delegates gave the workshop an average usefulness rating of 4.1 out of 5, on a scale where 1 is "not at all useful" and 5 is "extremely useful" and 4.4 out of 5, on the extent to which it meets its purpose, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely).</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers:</p> <p>Research Leadership Coaching Evaluation - The evaluation went out to all Managers of Researchers with a coaching award (n=7). 100% of Managers completed it.</p> <p>Managers gave an average rating of 8.9 out of 10 to the question “To what extent did working with a Coach from outside of the university facilitate an objective coaching conversation?” on a scale where 1 is not at all positive and 10 is very positive.</p> <p>Managers gave an average rating of 8.6 out of 10 to the question “Overall, how would you rate your experience of Research Leadership Coaching?” on a scale where 1 is not at all positive and 10 is very positive.</p>
--	--

72% of Managers reported that the Coaching helped with motivation and reduced anxiety/stress.

Managers listed the benefits to their Contract Research Staff:

- Helping to acknowledge existing leadership skills and to think about developing new skills, to the benefit of the team
- Increased confidence in role as Manager of Researcher, which will help with staff leadership more broadly
- Developing new and more efficient ways of approaching the management of Researchers
- Improved clarity in expectations and strengths
- Equipped with ideas to deploy when mentoring other research staff
- Influencing the way PDR/Personal Research Plan (PRP) meetings are approached with Researchers.

Researchers:

Research Leadership Coaching Evaluation - 6 out of 7 Researchers (86%) completed the evaluation (one Researcher's contract ended and could not be reached).

Researchers gave an average rating of 9.5 out of 10 to the question "To what extent did working with a Coach from outside of the university facilitate an objective coaching conversation?" on a scale where 1 is not at all positive and 10 is very positive.

Researchers also gave an average rating of 9.5 out of 10 to the question "Overall, how would you rate your experience of Research Leadership Coaching?" on a scale where 1 is not at all positive and 10 is very positive.

100% of Researchers reported that Coaching helped with self-esteem/confidence. 83% of Researchers also cited motivation and overcoming barriers as benefits of the Research Leadership Coaching.

	<p>Research-Only Staff reported Coaching benefits to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving from a passive position to evaluating personal success • Helping with prioritisation and focus • Learning how to build in time for personal development and continued reflection on development of leadership capabilities • Talking through gendered patterns of work/expectations and how to best manage them in relation to personal goals • Seeing oneself through another person’s eyes • Feeling more confident as a Researcher • Talking through career choices and concerns <p><i>(597 words)</i></p>
<p>Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result. (max 500 words)</p>	
<p>All proposed actions were completed:</p> <p>Review of Researchers on fixed-term contracts, by the People Directorate in discussion with Managers, with the aim of moving research-only staff from fixed-term to permanent contracts, where appropriate, subject to funding. Learning from this activity includes the need to ensure that, ongoing, a system is put in place to routinely review use of fixed-term contracts with managers, so that this does not become a one-off project. This has been agreed with the Chief People Officer and an update forms an action for next year.</p> <p>Evaluation of Managers of Researchers training bundle – The training bundle was well received by Managers (see above). We received rich feedback from Managers and their suggestions for improvements will be taken forward over the next year.</p> <p>Establishing a Contract Researcher Induction training bundle – The training bundle was rolled out to all current Research-Only Staff, as planned, and to all new Researchers on a monthly basis. The bundle will be evaluated next year.</p> <p>CEDARS 2023 – Measures of success for OBU Established and Senior Staff, include feeling valued by the institution for contributions, such as: “Grant/funding</p>	

applications” (Mostly/Fully 90% OBU; 67% sector av.); “Teaching and lecturing” (Mostly/Fully 87% OBU; 65% sector av.); “Publications and other research outputs” (Mostly/Fully 85% OBU; 67% sector av.)

Measures of success for OBU Research Staff include 90% of respondents agreeing/agreeing strongly that “Overall, I am satisfied with the facilities and services for researchers in my academic department” and 90% of Researchers reporting that they would recommend Oxford Brookes to prospective researchers.

CEDARS good news was shared on social media by the University’s News and Media Team.

CEDARS 2023 data also, importantly, highlighted areas where we can make improvements and a CEDARS action plan was formulated, which will feed into our Concordat and HR Excellence action plans. This includes 4 actions to support Established and Senior Staff and 4 actions to support Researchers (below).

In October 2023, we established a new CEDARS web page to celebrate the highlights and share the areas for improvement:

<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/sites/research-support/researcher-development/cedars>

Research Staff completion was lower than anticipated (50% target; 32% actual). For CEDARS 2025, we aim to increase Research Staff participation by asking our Managers of Researchers, who were highly engaged with CEDARS 2023, to encourage their Researchers to complete the survey.

Time Management feedback – This new training session was well received (see above). Suggestions taken from 22/23 feedback to extend the length of the session were incorporated in 23/24, to include a breakout discussion for researchers to share their experiences of how they apply techniques and which strategies work best for them.

Evaluation of Research-Only Staff Network – The Network was judged by Researchers to offer a number of benefits (see above). Suggestions from feedback on establishing themed meetings have been incorporated for 23/24 and will be evaluated at year-end.

Evaluation of Research Leadership Coaching – As a result of the many benefits cited by Researchers and Managers (see above), the University’s Central Research Fund has awarded additional funding for Research Leadership Coaching during 23/24.

(500 words)

Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period
(max 500 words)

Our forward plan for the coming year includes the following actions:

- An update from the Employment Relations and Policy Development Team Leader, in the People Directorate, on **instigating systematic annual reviews of the justification for fixed-term contracts for Researchers** on four or more years' service, between Head of Unit and assigned People Manager.
- **Implementing improvements to the Managers of Researchers training bundle**, from suggestions obtained from feedback.
- **An evaluation of the new Contract Researcher Induction training bundle**, including a review of usefulness, and suggestions for improvements and new content.
- **An evaluation of the Research-Only Staff Network**, including feedback on new themed Network meetings during 23/24 and the future direction of the Network.
- **CEDARS action - For Research Staff:** a) People Directorate to review university policy on arrangements for **family leave**. b) Promote revised policy in Code of Practice for the Career Management of Contract Researchers.
- **CEDARS action - For Research Staff:** a) People Directorate to update information and guidance to Researchers regarding end of contract, which flags eligibility for any **redundancy** entitlements. b) People Directorate to identify and develop training materials for all managers, to fill knowledge and skills gaps, to include redundancy. c) Signposting of a) in Code of Practice for the Career Management of Researchers and b) in Managers of Researchers training bundle.

- **CEDARS action - For Research Staff:** University to a) develop and b) promote **new promotion pathways**, including for Research-Only Staff.
- **CEDARS action - For Research Staff and Established & Senior Staff:** a) Researcher Development to make 1 min video for busy Researchers and Managers on the **narrative CV**, using research funding body examples and definitions. b) People Directorate to develop guidance and templates for internal promotions, taking into account the principles of the narrative CV.
- **CEDARS action - For Established & Senior Staff:** People Directorate to **review** approach to Performance Management, including **PDR** during 23/24 as part of People & Culture operational plan. Organisational Effectiveness & Development team to develop a **new Leadership and Management Framework** and resources, training and development for managers.
- **CEDARS action - For Established & Senior Staff:** Promote functionality of Staff Learning Portal as a tool to log and export CPD, to facilitate record keeping, so that all **training records** are in one central place.
- **CEDARS action - For Established & Senior Staff:** a) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team to take forward numerous planned actions, including a **review of harassment procedures**, awareness raising, reporting and guidance. b) Chair of Research Integrity & Governance Steering Group to make short training video on **Research Integrity for Managers of Researchers**, to include signposting to bullying and harassment and research misconduct policy and reporting.

(439 words)

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (max 200 words)

The Concordat annual report is reviewed and approved by the Concordat Working Group, which consists of representatives from the Careers Centre, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, People Directorate, Researcher Development and a Research-Only Staff representative from every Faculty.

The report is then submitted to University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) for consideration and approval. Following approval at University

RKEC, the annual report is summarised for the Board of Governors and published externally on the University's Concordat web page:

<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/research/concordat-to-support-researchers>

(79 words)

Signature on behalf of governing body: Professor Linda King, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research & Global Partnerships, laking@brookes.ac.uk

Contact for queries: Jennie Cripps, Researcher Development Co-ordinator, jcripps@brookes.ac.uk

This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk