

Academy Statement and Action Plan: Researcher Development Concordat

The Concordat and action plan

The revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (the Researcher Development Concordat) is an agreement between stakeholders to improve the employment and support for researchers and researcher careers in higher education in the UK. The Academy was a signatory of the previous Concordat (published in 2008), sits on the Concordat Strategy Group, and welcomed the publication of this revised version in September 2019 – once again becoming a signatory. The principles of the Concordat are underpinned by obligations for the four key stakeholder groups - funders, institutions, researchers and managers of researchers - to realise the aims of the Concordat.

The action plan set out here is based on the defining principles of the concordat: environment and culture, employment, and professional and career development. It sets out the changes the Academy will make to implement the Concordat, and record the ways in which the Academy achieves its obligations. The action plan will be updated as appropriate, and sits alongside concurrent changes the Academy is making related to research culture, such as research assessment and open access.

Academy ambition

Ultimately, what makes great engineering research happen is the people who undertake it, and to thrive these people require support and recognition. The Academy is committed to creating cultures of diverse perspectives in which everyone can thrive and enrich our collective performance. As a specialist funder of engineering research the Academy already meets many of the Concordat obligations, for example by offering mentorship, training and flexibility. However, there is always room for improvement, as set out in our action plan.

Industry

Although the Concordat is explicitly focused on researchers working within academia, there is also space to consider the overlaps with researchers in industry and those who may move between the two. Many Academy schemes are focused on the intersection between industry and academia, as increasing the flow of people and ideas between these areas is key to increasing collaboration and associated benefits.

Covid-19 pandemic

Some research culture issues are being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the long-term career impacts of lockdown and other changes are likely to vary by gender, ethnicity, age, and career stage. The Academy is closely following impacts of the pandemic on its awardees, as well as the broader research system.

Academy Action Plan

These actions include ensuring continued implementation of things the Academy already does, and also changes and implementation of new initiatives and actions.

Principle and associated funder responsibilities	Pre-existing initiatives and practice the Academy must ensure are continued in order to comply as a signatory:	New initiatives and actions to be implemented:	Academy lead	Status/timelines
A) Environment and culture				
<p>A1) Include requirements which promote equitable, inclusive and positive research cultures and environments, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy has an Equality, diversity and inclusion policy, which exists to ensure that awards and grants are allocated on the basis of clear and transparent criteria - regardless of personal characteristics or background - and applies at all stages of award/grant application, event registration and nomination processes and throughout the period of the award/grant. In the review stage, the Academy provides unconscious bias awareness briefing notes and unconscious bias awareness training for the selection panel members. The Academy expects institutions associated with awardees to be committed to and provide support that aligns with the principles of the Concordat. This is set out in scheme guidance notes, and the Academy's standard research programme contract includes the Concordat. The contracts for awards contain clauses relating to research integrity and misconduct allegations. 		Research Team, Research Committee	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>1/9/20 – Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 - Continued compliance</p> <p>16/9/22 – Continued compliance</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy website now has a programme policy documents page where all relevant statements and policies, including the Researcher Development Concordat, can be easily accessed. 		Policy team, supported by research team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>15/9/2022 - Complete</p>
<p>A2) Consider how funding opportunities and policies can facilitate different patterns and ways of working, and promote the wellbeing and mental health of researchers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants are able to apply for flexible working, as set out in applicant guidance notes. Awardees are entitled to maternity, paternity and adoption leave under their host institution's normal conditions of employment. The Academy will extend the duration of the award pro-rata to take into account such periods of leave. The Academy has Childcare and Caring Costs Support Guidance, which is shared with awardees. This covers additional childcare or caring costs that arise when attending the Academy's organised training courses or invited talks directly relate to their awards. This guidance is also applicable to Academy Fellows or invited guests when attending the Academy's invited meetings or events (e.g. reviewer and interview panel meetings, workshop or conferences). 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>1/9/20 – Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 - Continued compliance</p> <p>16/9/22 – Continued compliance</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy aims to boost awareness of existing flexible working provisions, by the creation and publication of new case studies which feature researchers who utilised flexible working provisions. Going forward, there will be continued consideration of 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>7/10/21 - Complete</p>

	<p>flexible working provisions when compiling case studies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The COVID-19 pandemic presented big challenges to working patterns and ways of working for awardees. The Academy published COVID-19 advice to awardees, accommodated necessary changes to projects/activities as much as possible and honoured costs incurred in good faith whether plans went ahead or not. Wellbeing and mental health seminars for awardees, started in 2021 continued into 2022. Subjects covered include: navigating uncertainty in research, burnout and wellbeing, and resilience and wellbeing in academia. 			16/9/22 – Continued compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy will continue working to understand the best actions it can take as a funder, update this plan with them and implement them according to an appropriate timeline. 	Research Team, Policy Team and Research Committee	<p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p>No further actions were identified in 2021/22.</p>
A3) Ensure that funding call requirements and selection processes offer equality of opportunity between different groups of researchers, recognise personal contexts, and promote positive research cultures and working conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awards are advertised with clear diversity statements and there is substantial emphasis on attracting underrepresented groups. For Research Fellowships, universities are limited in the number of applicants they are permitted to support for the scheme, additional application are permitted for universities if the applicant comes from an underrepresented group. For 2021/22 the number of additional applications permitted was increased from one to two and the underrepresented group were specified as those significantly underrepresented in UK engineering research: Women, Black people, including those with any mixed ethnicity with Black ethnic background(s), and disabled people. For reasons of transparency, reviewer guidance notes for schemes are made public on the Academy website. Unconscious bias and conflict of interests are included in the reviewer guidance, and reviewers are also reminded of these again prior to selection meetings. The Academy runs Access Mentoring support, which aims to provide additional support to applicants from underrepresented groups through the grant application process. Following the pilot in 2021 the approach has been reviewed and updated to target groups significantly underrepresented in UK engineering research for 2022/23. 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>1/9/20 – Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 - Continued compliance</p> <p>16/9/22 – Continued compliance and improvements to access mentoring and positive action initiative</p>
B) Employment				
B1) Include requirements which support the improvement of working conditions for researchers, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awardees are required to complete annual reports, allowing the Academy to check progress and provide necessary support via the mentorship arrangement. Awardees are able to inform the Academy if their host department is not supporting them appropriately (for example, not aligning with what is set out in the head of department endorsement letter) and the Academy can take some steps to support the awardee. When 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>1/9/20 – Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 - Continued compliance</p>

	necessary, Academy awards are fully transferable to a different host institution.			16/9/22 – Continued compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awardees are formally informed through their contracts that they can notify the Academy if their host department is not supporting them appropriately. This operates via the awardees' annual reports – if something is flagged in their report, the issue can be discussed in their annual review meeting. Their head of school or department can be invited to discuss issues and try to find a resolution. 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>7/10/21 – Complete</p> <p>16/9/22 – Continued compliance</p>
B2) Review the impact of relevant funding call requirements on researchers' employment, particularly in relation to career progression and lack of job security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy has undertaken a career tracker survey which invited awardees at all career stages to respond, from early-career researchers to senior academics. This aimed to ascertain the impact on Academy support on career progression, and was undertaken by an external organisation. In November 2020 the Academy published the results of this survey. 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Published November 2020, next survey proposed in 2025</p>
B3) Support institutions to develop policies and frameworks to promote sustainable employment arrangements and enhance job security, and provide opportunities for career progression.	N/A: As a comparatively small funder it may not be appropriate to fulfil this role. However, in the context of the Academy leading the profession, providing open and transparent processes may help open dialogue with other organisations on best practice.			
B4) Consider the balance of their relevant funding streams in providing access to research funding and its impact at all career levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2019, the Academy Research Committee and Research Team reviewed the eligibility requirements of all schemes. The review was completed, with necessary changes identified and actioned. Broad coverage across career stages exists in funds, and following the review Senior Research Fellows eligibility window was extended to include lecturers. The Academy provides additional funding opportunities to all existing awardees for the progression of their research and careers, including Regional Engagement Awards and Proof of Concept Funding for awardees. Following a pause in 2020/21 Proof of Concept awards restarted in 2021/22, while Regional Engagement Awards remain suspended subject to BEIS funding. 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETED 2019</p> <p>IN PROGRESS - SOME ACTIVITIES CURRENTLY PAUSED</p> <p>1/9/20 - Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 – Some activities paused due to the impact of the pandemic</p> <p>16/9/2022 – some activities paused subject to BEIS funding</p>

C) Professional and career development				
<p>C1) Incorporate specific professional development requirements in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies. This should include researchers' engagement in a minimum of 10 days' professional development pro rata per year, and evidence of effective career development planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectation of 10 days professional development is included in Academy reporting guidance - the Academy expects awardees to participate in professional development activities. Awardees are required to report and update their CPD professional qualifications, career and personal development in their annual progress reports to receive feedback and advice from their mentors (the Academy Fellows). To support awardees, the Academy provides a number of professional development activities, including mentorship, additional funding (see B4) and training opportunities (covering commercialisation, STEM ambassadors, media, mentoring training, policy engagement training, and the SUSTAIN programme for female researchers). In 2020, new media training and commercial training for senior academics was introduced to help expand the reach of the training offer to cover more senior stage awardees. In 2020/2021, the Academy also launched a new online series – The Academy CAFÉ – which have included discussions relevant to researcher career development, including inclusive leadership, spinouts, and specialist technical areas. Awardees are also entitled to use grants to get professional qualifications and join professional memberships in their specialist areas. 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>1/9/20 – Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 - Continued compliance</p> <p>16/9/22 – Continued compliance</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and communicate examples of the breadth of what constitutes professional development and link to this within awardee guidance, working with other funders from the Concordat Strategy Group. Explore effective ways of encouraging awardees to explore development offers of their institutions along with the Academy's offers. Explore how to better link Professional Engineering Institutions and professional registration to research programme activities. 		Policy Team (CSG link), Research Team
<p>C2) Embed the Concordat Principles and researcher development into research assessment strategies and processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy embeds these principles in current practice, as reflected in the inclusion of the Concordat in various documents (see answer A1) and in the processes surrounding reviewers and the selection process (see answer A3). 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>1/9/20 – Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 - Continued compliance</p> <p>16/9/22 – Continued compliance</p>

C3) Acknowledge that a large proportion of the researchers they fund will move on to careers beyond academia, and consider how they can encourage and support this within their remit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy champions researchers working in industry, and those moving between industry and academia. This is reflected in the schemes the Academy offers (such as the Industrial Fellowship Scheme), and in the additional training and funding awardees are offered – for example the Proof of Concept awards, commercialisation training, and their entitlement to use grants to get professional qualifications and join professional memberships. Case studies showcasing diverse career paths of awardees have been created and uploaded as of 2021, utilising the findings of the career tracker survey. 		Research Team	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>1/9/20 – Complete</p> <p>7/10/21 - Continued compliance</p> <p>16/9/22 – Continued compliance</p>
D) Implementation and review				
D1) Raise the visibility of the Concordat and champion its Principles within their organisation at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos showcasing the Academy's support are available on the webpage. For example a Research Fellow video showcase mentioning the Academy's support for maternity leave and a video showcase outlining the support for research awardees. All videos are also published on the Academy's YouTube channel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess current communications aimed at prospective applicants, applicants and awardees for how they could be improved with respect to communicating Academy provision with regard to career development. Any actions arising from this will be added to this action plan. 	Research Team, working with comms team and policy team	<p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p>Aiming to explore and implement changes in 2022/23, dependent on comms capacity</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will organise a 'teach-in' for Research team and R&I Policy team to increase awareness of concordat and research culture initiatives in general. In doing this, consider how the principles could apply to other areas of Academy activity beyond the research programmes. 	Policy team, supported by research team	<p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p>No progress in 2021/22. Aiming to explore and implement changes in 2022/23</p>
D2) Identify a senior manager champion and associated group with relevant representation from across the organisation with responsibility for annual review and reporting on progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Head of Research and the Research Team (research@raeng.org.uk) are well-placed to fulfil this role. They are also required to report to the Academy Research Committee with an annual review of progress. 		Head of Research and Research Team	COMPLETE 2019
D3) For organisations employing researchers, ensure that they are formally represented in developing and monitoring organisational efforts to implement the Concordat Principles.	N/A: Academy is not an employer of researchers			
D4) Undertake a gap analysis to compare their policies and practice against the Concordat Principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An initial gap analysis was conducted in 2019, which was discussed by Research Team and Research Committee, and used to create this action plan. 		Policy team, supported by research team	COMPLETE 2019

D5) Draw up and publish an action plan within a year of signing the Concordat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan created, reviewed and published by September 2020. 		Policy team and research team	COMPLETE 2020
D6) Set up processes for systematically and regularly gathering the views of researchers they fund or employ, to inform and improve the organisation's approach to and progress on implementing the Concordat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a process to inform and improve the organisation's approach to and progress on implementing the Concordat, drawing on the views of awardees. Appendix added into awardee annual report – career development update, and a feedback for the Academy section. This is handled on a case by case basis. 		Research Team	COMPLETE 7/10/21 - Complete
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research culture café style event embedded into existing awardee events. This could be at the annual Research Forum, as part of inductions, or another component of the events schedule for awardees. 	Research Team	IN PROGRESS No progress in 2021/22. Aiming to explore and implement changes in 2022/23
D7) Produce an annual report to their governing body or equivalent authority, which includes their strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plan and progress, which subsequently is publicly available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual reporting using this action plan, implemented in line with the requirements. Research Committee annually review this action plan document as a Committee meeting item and is published on our website 			COMPLETE 7/10/21 - First full review completed (Committee will next review action plan in full in autumn 2022)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our commitments to DORA, Open Access, Technician Commitment and Researcher Development Concordat are reviewed and updated annually. Updates will be made clear associated documents available on the Academy webpage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concordat principles/requirements will be considered in implementation of the recommendations from the Tickell Independent Review of Bureaucracy. 	Research team and policy team	IN PROGRESS Aiming to explore and implement changes in 2021/22