

HEFCW Action Plan for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

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Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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HEFCW Action Plan for [The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#)

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is an agreement and series of commitments to improve the employment and support for researchers and researcher careers in higher education (HE) in the UK. The Concordat lays out obligations for funders (such as HEFCW), institutions (including universities), researchers, and managers of researchers in working together to realise its aims.

HEFCW expects the institutions it funds to value their researchers, to invest in their professional development, and to provide positive working environments that allow them to reach their full potential. The Concordat provides a framework for HEFCW to work with institutions to promote positive working environments and rewarding careers for researchers, while respecting universities as autonomous institutions with varied missions.

HEFCW Actions are arranged against the Concordat's obligations for funders. These obligations are themselves divided according to the Concordat's three defining Principles: Environment and Culture; Employment; Professional and Career Development.

Some Actions are steps that HEFCW can take itself. Others address systemic issues and will require coordinated efforts by organisations across the HE sector. HEFCW is committed to working with other sector stakeholders in making progress on these larger issues and promoting the principles of the Concordat. Where the principles of the Concordat overlap with other sector frameworks and commitments, HEFCW will wherever possible seek alignment between different initiatives to reduce complexity and burden.

Progress against all Actions will be assessed annually and a report produced for HEFCW's Council. Actions will be updated appropriately following each annual reporting cycle.

To show full support for the Concordat and its implementation, the 4 UK national funding bodies (Research England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and the Department for the Economy - Northern Ireland) have funded an enhanced secretariat function for the Concordat, hosted in Universities UK.

Impact of Covid-19: HEFCW acknowledges that the disruptions caused by Covid-19 have had and will continue to have significant impacts on the development of researcher careers. HEFCW also acknowledges that while all researchers are affected by these disruptions, some groups will be more impacted than others. HEFCW will continue to work with HE institutions to identify the groups most affected, and will use this information in determining the deployment of available funding and resources to implement the Concordat Action Plan and associated initiatives.

Concordat funder obligation: funders must...	HEFCW Actions	Success measure	Timeline
<i>Principle 1: Environment and Culture</i>			
<p>Include requirements which promote equitable, inclusive and positive research cultures and environments, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with sector on updating T&Cs of grant funding to require institutions to become signatories of the Concordat. 2. Engage with institutions to encourage strategic coherence of responses to the Concordat with other institutional policies and policy documents (eg. Equality Strategy Plans), both in HEFCW and in institutions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation complete and results analysed and fed into policy development process. 2. HEFCW and institutional policies relevant to the issues addressed by the Concordat are coherent and complementary. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 12 months 2. Ongoing
<p>Consider how funding opportunities and policies can facilitate different patterns and ways of working, and promote the wellbeing and mental health of researchers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review allocation of HEFCW PGR funding to HEIs against principles of Concordat. 2. Continue to review new and existing policies through internal processes, including equality impact assessments, and include consideration of wellbeing, mental health, and flexible working patterns 3. Engage with other funders and other sector stakeholders on national efforts to promote flexible working and the importance of mental health and wellbeing, as part of wider national efforts to promote positive research cultures. This will include identifying appropriate metrics, data-gathering, and reporting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PGR review report and accompanying EIA find no adverse impacts/positive impacts for PGRs in terms of Concordat principles. 2. Continuing and future funding processes consider researcher wellbeing as standard. 3. Future sector surveys and consultations include robust metrics for assessing research culture, and show improvement. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 18-24 months 2. 12 months 3. Ongoing

	processes, as outlined in UKRI's Action Plan.		
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.	1. Engage with other funders to share best practice on how to promote equality of opportunity and positive research cultures through funding requirements and selection processes.	1. UK funder requirements and processes show greater alignment and coherence regarding equality of opportunity and promotion of positive research cultures.	1. Ongoing

<i>Principle 2: Employment</i>			
Include requirements which support the improvement of working conditions for researchers, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with sector on updating T&Cs of grant funding to require institutions to become signatories of the Concordat. 2. Continue to prioritise the implementation of the Diamond Review recommendations, including sustained real terms QR funding to allow institutions to invest in their researchers in the long term, subject to funding being made available to HEFCW. 3. Join National Forum on tackling bullying and harassment in R&I, test and gather best practice policies, and share with institutions so they can update their Action Plans appropriately. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation complete and results analysed and fed into policy development process. 2. Diamond Review recommendations are implemented as allowed by funding made available. 3. HEFCW is a member of the Forum and contributes to its activities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 12 months 2. Ongoing 3. Ongoing
Review the impact of relevant funding call requirements on researchers' employment, particularly in relation to career progression and lack of job security.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage with other funders and other sector stakeholders on UK efforts to standardise processes, T&Cs, and expectations for fixed term research contracts and their place within varied research careers. 2. Make job security, career progression, and sustainability of the research base priority areas of discussion for HEFCW's annual institutional research and innovation review meetings. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. T&Cs, processes, and expectations for fixed term research contracts are standardised across the UK. 2. HEFCW and institutions discuss these areas regularly. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing 2. 12 months
Support institutions to develop policies and frameworks to promote sustainable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to fund Welsh Crucible, an award-winning training programme for future research leaders in Wales, subject to review and budget availability. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEFCW continues to fund Welsh Crucible. 2. HEFCW continues to fund Sêr Cymru. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review after 12 months 2. Review after 12 months

<p>employment arrangements and enhance job security, and provide opportunities for career progression.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Continue to fund Sêr Cymru programme, focused on attracting and developing mid-career research talent to and in Wales, subject to review and budget availability. 3. Commission and fund Advance HE to run a strategic research leadership training programme, to take place first in 2021 as an online workshop. 4. Through the Higher Education Investment and Recovery Fund (HE-IRF), fund sector collaborative programme to sustain the research base using needs-based targeted support to PGRs, ECRs, and staff in need of bridging support. 5. Continue to engage with sector stakeholders on emerging opportunities for researcher career development and explore how HEFCW can support such efforts (e.g. promotion through our communication channels, encouraging strategic coherence). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Advance HE programme occurs and is a success. 4. HE-IRF funding is successfully distributed to those with greatest need. 5. Sector-led efforts continue and are supported by HEFCW. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Review after 12 months 4. 12 months 5. Ongoing
<p>Consider the balance of their relevant funding streams in providing access to research funding and its impact at all career levels.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete review of QR research funding to Welsh institutions. 2. Continue to engage with funders, HEIs, and other sector stakeholders to map sector-wide provision, identify gaps, and explore new funding options. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review is completed. 2. HEFCW funding complements other available funding in supporting all research career stages. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 18 months 2. Ongoing

<i>Principle 3: Professional and Career Development</i>			
<p>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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with sector on updating T&Cs of grant funding to require institutions to become signatories of the Concordat. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation complete and results analysed and fed into policy development process. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 12 months
<p>Embed the Concordat Principles and researcher development into research assessment strategies and processes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As part of the review of UK national research assessment in partnership with other UK funding bodies, ensure that researcher development (as part of the research environment) is given due consideration in design of any future national research assessment exercise. 2. Produce regular reports on delivery of HEFCW's Action Plan for the Research Wales Committee, and an annual report on delivery of this Action Plan for Council. 3. Continue to ensure broad representation of researcher voices on Research Wales Committee, including an Early Career 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Future UK national research assessment approaches accord due importance to the principles of the Concordat. 2. Reporting to RWC and Council are built into HEFCW's annual reporting cycle. 3. RWC membership reflects a broad range of sector voices. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3-5 years 2. 12 months 3. Ongoing

	Researcher representative, through regular review of membership.		
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.	1. Engage with other funders (incl. UKRI) and other sector stakeholders on national efforts to promote more flexible career paths between academic research, industry, and the third sector.	1. Greater flexibility of research careers across UK sector.	1. Ongoing