

University of Greenwich Researcher Development Concordat

Annual Report 2022

Background: The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (September 2019), commonly known as 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 Concordat has three defining Principles: <file:///staff.gread.gre.ac.uk/USR/Vol2/am5330s/Desktop/concordat.html>

- Environment and Culture: This Principle recognises that a proactive and collaborative approach is required between all **stakeholders**, to create and develop positive environments and cultures in which all researchers can flourish and achieve their full potential.
- Employment: This Principle recognises the importance of fair, transparent and merit-based recruitment, progression and promotion, effective performance management, and a good work-life balance. All **stakeholders** need to address long-standing challenges around **insecurity of employment** and career progression, ensuring equality of experience and opportunity for all, irrespective of background, contract type and personal circumstances.
- Professional and Career Development: This Principle recognises the importance of continuous professional and **career development**, particularly as researchers pursue a wide range of careers.

Progress Review

Details of strategic objectives, their implementation and success measures, as well as future steps are outlined below.

Strategic objectives: To embed the principles of the Concordat, the UoG (University of Greenwich) objectives include initiatives towards providing a supportive research environment and culture where the contribution of researchers is valued and recognised, as well as provide support to grow their future professional and career development skills.

Strategic Objectives, Implementation and Success measures: These are outlined as follows:

- To ensure that all relevant staff are **aware of the Concordat**, the UoG letter of commitment and signatory to the Concordat documents were posted on the external university webpages and the university portal (Dec 2020, Jan 2021).
- Recognition of the importance of the Concordat was demonstrated in advance of the UoG obtaining an official signatory status, where RETI (Research and Enterprise Training Institute) presented a talk on 'The importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' at the BAME Staff Network launch event (Oct 2019).

- A gap analysis was undertaken to compare the policies and practices at the UoG against the Concordat Principles and initial action points identified and posted on the external university webpages and the portal. The gap analysis report was presented and discussed at the (i) UoG REC (Research and Enterprise Committee) meeting, (ii) PGR ECR (postgraduate researchers and early career researchers) forum meeting, (iii) FRDC (Faculty Research Degrees Committee) meetings for each faculty, (iv) via RETI training to PGRs, research supervisors. An action plan was drawn up in consultation with HR (Human Resources), Faculties, GRE (Greenwich Research and Enterprise), and GSU (Greenwich Students Union).

A number of steps were taken to implement the strategic objectives as follows:

- To ensure that the **university institutional policies and practices relevant to researchers are inclusive, equitable and transparent, and are well-communicated** to researchers and their managers via different fora and committee meetings across the university.
Examples included:
 - Discussion at the university REC meeting and approval of guidelines on topics such as the: UoG PGR protected characteristics towards an equitable representation of the PGR research community and a focus on modes of study and research funding, University guidelines for remote PGR studies during the COVID-19 pandemic, Postgraduate Research Student Recruitment, UoG Research degree Dual Award Policy, UKCGE (UK Council for Graduate Education) Recognised Research Supervisor Programme, UoG gap analysis on a Concordat to support research integrity.
 - UoG refreshed strategic development (2021-2030) within structured areas of Research and Knowledge Exchange, People, Student success, Digital, Partnerships, estate. University-wide consultation meetings have helped to provide feedback for inclusion in the revised strategic approach.
 - Ongoing work for a UoG application for the Athena Swan accreditation scheme towards recognising good practices including the advancement of gender equality.
- **To ensure researchers and their managers are aware of, and act in accordance with, the highest standards of research integrity.**
Examples included:
 - A gap analysis on the Concordat to support research integrity has been undertaken towards future action points.
 - The University's Research Ethics Committee considers/approves research projects requiring ethical approval in accordance to the university ethics policy.
 - RETI has provided training on research integrity to PGRs, researchers and managers.
 - RETI has provided training on research ethics for PGRs, research staff.
- **To promote good mental health and wellbeing of researchers,** the university's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2022 supports researchers through effective wellbeing and mental health provisions, and aligns with the university's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy.
Examples included:

- HR provided training on MHFA (Mental Health First Aid).
- RETI provided training for PGRs on Overcoming Procrastination, Developing Personal Resilience, Stress Management, Academic Writing: Reduce Anxiety, 7 Habits for PhD Researcher Wellbeing, Coach Yourself Through Imposter Syndrome.
- RETI provided training for PGRs and staff: productivity retreat with time and stress management techniques for researchers.
- RETI provided signposts for PGRs such as: The Wellbeing Thesis <https://thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/>, Vitae-designed (and adapted for UoG) ‘Practical advice for doctoral candidates for developing knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing’.

- **To ensure open, transparent and merit-based recruitment**, which attracts excellent researchers, using fair and inclusive selection and appointment.
Examples included:
- Recruitment guidelines provided by HR, with interview panels comprising of a diverse workforce to ensure no unintended bias.
- Inclusion of ECRs in interview panels for recruitment of PGRs (also in supervisory teams), such as the UA (University Alliance) DTA (Doctoral Training Alliance) COFUND fellows.

- **To provide an effective induction**, ensuring that researchers are integrated into the community and are aware of policies and practices relevant to their position.
Examples included:
- Induction of new staff by the university senior management.
- PGR Induction programme delivered for new PGR students by faculties with input from RETI.

- **To provide clear and transparent merit-based recognition, reward and promotion pathways** that recognise the full range of researchers’ contributions, and the diversity of personal circumstances.
Examples included:
- Implementation of the HR merit-based recognition and reward/promotion scheme, promoting the diversity of researchers.
- GRE Research and Enterprise Awards and Celebration event with particular focus on PGRs, ECRs.

- **To ensure that excellent people management is championed** throughout the organisation and embedded in institutional culture, through annual appraisals, transparent promotion criteria, and workload allocation.
Examples included:
- HR provided training on the appraisal process.
- HR delivered staff promotion briefings.
- Staff workload allocation was via the workload allocation model, which is currently being reviewed to improve.

- **To recognise that moving between, and working across, employment sectors** can bring benefits to research and researchers, and support opportunities for researchers to experience this.
Examples included:
 - RETI provided training on Careers outside of academia; Careers in leadership for researchers.
 - HR provided job shadowing scheme to consider work with external institutions.
- **To provide opportunities for engagement of researchers and managers** with professional development activities.
Examples included:
 - RETI provided a training programme for PGRs/research staff, including training on public engagement, research funding.
 - RETI provided training for PGRs, such as employability skills for researchers, securing a first academic post.
 - HR organised Aurora programme on leadership development for women.
 - HR provided training courses, such as Career Coaching for Managers, Coaching for All, Recruitment and Selection, EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion).
 - Faculty organised and delivered seminars.
 - Appointment of researchers as UA DTA Fellowships and Studentships. DTA scholars receive a very valuable and enriching experience through specific training delivered by the UA universities, as well as opportunities for collaboration and placements. RETI provided training opportunities to PGRs from other universities via the UA DTA programme.
 - RETI hosted University Alliance DTA Summer School in 2020.
- **Other activities** to improve the research environment and culture included:
 - PGR-ECR forum: RETI organises the PGR-ECR forum which has representation from all faculties, and action points are discussed at the university Research and Enterprise Committee, thus providing good integration of the process within the University's research infrastructure. Discussion point examples include researcher's training needs, university-wide 3MT (3 minute thesis) competition, workload allocations, support for PGRs during the COVID19 pandemic.
 - University-wide 3MT launched by RETI in 2019, competed in the 2020 and 2021 national competition, and a UoG PGR won the People's Choice Award in 2021.
 - Overall RETI provided a training programme for PGRs, early, mid and established researchers. In response to the feedback from our researchers and developments within the sector, the programme is refreshed on an annual basis. A total of 170+ sessions delivered in 2020-21, and 204 sessions being delivered in 2021-22.
 - RETI organised workshops to enhance the PGR student experience in 2020 and 2021, with input from various sections of the university such as the Wellbeing Services, International, Faculty Research offices, Accommodation, Finance, Library Services etc.
 - UoG HR Excellence in Research Award accreditation went through a review process and retained successfully (2020).
 - University representation at the UA Senior Management, Management and Training Groups.

- In order to **review the quality of the research environment and culture**, feedback has been sought from researchers including Vitae's CEDARS (Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey) in July 2020 and Advance HE's PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey) between April-May 2021.
- **CEDARS** aligns to the Principles of the Concordat and provides institutions with critical information on their progress in implementing the Principles. CEDARS was conducted by RETI with academic staff and PGR students as the target research audience. An analysis of the findings, and its mapping with the Researcher Development Concordat principles were presented at the university Research and Enterprise Committee meetings in September 2020, April 2021, respectively. Faculty responses and their action points were received in July 2021.

Within the faculty responses, the role of Research Group/Centre leads has been highlighted, such as bringing the Concordat principles to the attention of research group leaders, providing support for researchers engaging in professional engagement of commercialisation, secondments/placements, and via the appraisal process; working with staff in peer reviewing papers and grants before submission as part of their workload; peer reviewing publications for journal publishers and grants. Also, staff encouraged to obtain professional body recognition, as also external examinership experience. Faculty ECR networks have provided support and development of ECRs. Funding allocated to support staff time, bespoke training, event hosting, and small projects. Female staff are encouraged to participate in the Aurora programme. Research Group/Centre leads are encouraged to mentor/coach staff. Also, all staff within faculties are encouraged to attend relevant RETI training which is reviewed within the faculties.

The university participated in **PRES 2021** and the findings presented at the university Research and Enterprise Committee in September 2021 and the Academic Council in January 2022. Faculty level data was analysed by each faculty towards future action points. These were shared across the faculties to promote areas of best practice. A university-wide action plan is being worked upon with lead responsibility from across the university, such as the PVC R&KE (Pro Vice Chancellor, R&KE: Research and Knowledge Exchange), RETI, faculty Associate Deans R&KE. These include collaborative working within GRE, RETI, faculties, Doctoral Society, GSU, ILS (Information and Library Services), PAS (Planning and Statistics), Student Wellbeing Services etc.

Future work to evidence success measures with data:

- To provide data to evidence the above initiatives with the help of new management systems with reporting facilities, such as 'Horizon' for university-level information, and 'PULSE' for researcher-specific information. Examples of data include:
- Number of researchers trained on particular training by RETI, and HR. (RETI training offered a total of 170+ training occurrences in 2020-21, and 204 in 2021-22. Number

of attendees at its training sessions increased from just under 1,000 in 2019-20 to 1,995 in 2020-21).

- Number of people, including researchers, completed the Aurora programme (20 in 2019-20 and 10 in 2020-21). This data will need to be filtered for researchers.
- GRE Research and Enterprise Awards and Celebration Day. Number and details of researchers in receipt of awards; and number of attendees at the event needs to be filtered for PGRs, ECRs.
- Data on number of days researchers engaged with professional development, (Concordat requirement of minimum of 10 days pro, rata per year).
- Data on ECRs on interview panels.
- Data on attendance numbers for appraisal training.
- Data on attendance at staff briefings, such as promotions.
- Data on job shadowing scheme.

- **Future initiatives:**

Examples include:

- To set up a Researcher Development Working Group with representation from RETI, HR, GSU, Doctoral Society etc.
- To organise a series of talks on career options for PGR's, using research experience in industry; sessions by alumni etc.
- To organise university-wide seminar series.
- RETI to organise future themed workshops to enhance PGR student experience.
- Align the role of research Institutes, Centers, Groups with the university R&KE sub-strategy.
- To explore sabbatical schemes for staff to gain experience and exposure to careers beyond academia.
- Encourage faculties to establish ECR Networks (where not already in place), and mid-career Research Networks.

Annual Report reviewed and approved by the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, February 2022.

Abbreviations:

- 3MT: 3 Minute Thesis
- BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
- CEDARS: Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey
- DTA: Doctoral Training Alliance
- ECR: Early Career Researcher
- EDI: Equality, Diversity, Inclusion
- PVC R&KE: Pro Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange
- DVC: Deputy Vice Chancellor
- ECR/s: Early Career Researcher/s
- EDI: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- FRDC: Faculty Research Degrees Committee
- GRE: Greenwich Research and Enterprise
- GSU: Greenwich Students Union
- HR: Human Resources
- ILS: Information and Library Services
- MHFA: Mental Health First Aid
- PAS: Planning and Statistics

PGR: Postgraduate Researcher

PVC: Pro Vice Chancellor

PGRs: Postgraduate Research students

PRES: Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

R&KE: Research and Knowledge Exchange

RETI: Research and Enterprise Training Institute

UA: University Alliance

UoG: University of Greenwich

UKCGE: UK Council for Graduate Education