

*Approved in June 2022*

*Updated in June 2023*

*Next update due in June 2024*

## **UK Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers ('Researcher Development Concordat') Action Plan**

### **The Royal Society's commitment**

The Royal Society's fundamental purpose is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

The Society strives to take a leadership role, both in terms of the support it provides to its grant holders and in advocating for the establishment of the best environment for researchers in the UK. Supporting talented early career researchers through its fellowship programmes and helping them to develop leadership skills and build independent research careers are key activities undertaken by the Society to achieve its mission. The **long-term support** provided at a challenging career stage, has helped many of the Royal Society research fellows to make the transition from a postdoctoral researcher to a senior position and establish themselves as independent scientific leaders. The high **flexibility** built into the Society's fellowship schemes has enabled award holders to pursue their research passion by giving them the confidence and support to manage their research career alongside other personal commitments. In an increasingly competitive global environment, it is essential that the UK's research system enables excellent researchers to flourish and creates a culture that fosters science that is high-quality and supports **diverse career paths**.

### **Implementation and review**

The revised Researcher Development Concordat outlines frameworks and conditions for the creation of a supportive and nurturing research environment, essential for the development of excellence and sustainability of researcher careers in the UK. The action plan developed here sets out the approach undertaken by the Society to address our signatory obligations in line with [strategic priorities](#) and the Concordat principles covering Environment and Culture, Employment, and Professional and Career Development. As part of the creation of the action plan a gap analysis of existing and ongoing

programmes of work was conducted. Where the Society already meets its obligations in its role as signatory the Society will continue to deliver and build on these activities<sup>1</sup>.

To ensure effective implementation and review of the action plan, the Society will seek to evaluate and report on progress annually with oversight of the Royal Society Grants Committee and a nominated representative. The progress of the plan will be tracked by the concordat implementation group including members of the researcher community and Fellowship.

1. The Royal Society is committed to playing its part in shaping and embedding an inclusive research culture and attracts and retains talented researchers in the UK

Concordat Principle 1: Environment and culture		
Funder responsibilities	Action(s)	Status/ Timeline
Include requirements which promote equitable, inclusive and positive research cultures and environments, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is a key priority for the Royal Society. In response to the reports focused on the diversity profile of <a href="#">STEM academic communities</a> the Society has undertaken the following activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Convene cross-sector discussions to review the report findings and identify practical actions that can be taken by all.</li> <li>○ Use the data of the <a href="#">‘eligible pool’</a> to benchmark the diversity of applicants and awardees for the Society’s early career fellowships.</li> <li>○ Develop an <a href="#">improved guidance</a> to applicants for early career fellowships to enhance inclusiveness of application process whilst continuing to work with Institutions to ensure applicants have equal access to resources prior to their application to a Royal Society Fellowship.</li> <li>○ Host a promotional webinar for Early Career Fellowship applicants to ensure transparency of information around Royal Society funding and share the experience and advice of current award holders.</li> <li>○ Develop a pilot initiative to support undergraduate students from under-represented groups:</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2021-Complete
		Ongoing
		July 2022-complete
		July 2023

<sup>1</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/publications/2021/royal-society-and-the-technician-commitment/>

	<p>In March 2022, the Society was able to provide additional funds to Royal Society Fellowship/Professorship holders to supplement the delivery of their research programmes and prioritise contribution towards undergraduate students from minoritised communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A survey data analysis conducted in March 2023 confirmed the positive outcome of the pilot: 62% of the research fellows who used the funds to support undergraduate students were able to prioritise students from under-represented groups.</li> <li>○ Continue to review processes to help ensure that all talented applicants have an equitable chance to succeed as per the assessment criteria. This includes ensuring all panel members are briefed on unconscious bias in decision making as part of the assessment process and update the guidance regarding the support for disabled applicants.</li> <li>○ Continue to publish annual diversity data across all the Society's activities including grant programmes.</li> <li>○ Explore new ways to broaden the diversity of selection committees to ensure representation of the wider research community.</li> </ul>	<p>March 2022- Complete</p> <p>March 2023 Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to assess the impact of Cov-19 and account for disruptions caused by the pandemic to research activities recognising that these may vary according to personal contexts and diverse career paths.</li> <li>• Work with others in the sector to better understand factors and influences on mental health<sup>2</sup> in research environments in order to identify appropriate actions that can be taken by the Society.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

<sup>2</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/diversity-in-science/understanding-mental-health-in-the-research-environment/>

<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Royal Society fellowships can be held flexibly to accommodate award holders' personal circumstances. The Society continues to engage with and listen to the research community to ensure current policies and positions on flexible working, <a href="#">leave</a> and <a href="#">childcare support</a> address the needs of researchers, particularly those at an early career stage.</li> <li>The Society recognises that there are diverse research career paths, as well as the challenges of managing a research career alongside other personal commitments. In March 2022, we started a new collaboration with the Daphne Jackson Trust to support talented individuals who wish to return to research following a career break. In November 2022, the Society welcomed the first cohort of RS funded Daphne Jackson Research Fellows at the New Research Fellows Induction Day. In addition to salary and research support, the Society also offers a range of training and networking opportunities to support the career development for its Daphne Jackson Research Fellows.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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2: The Society engages with academia and funders to advocate for the conduct of excellent science and the establishment of the best environment for researchers

Concordat Principle 2: Employment		
Funder responsibilities	Action(s)	Timeline/Status
<p>Include requirements which support the improvement of working conditions for researchers, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and report on compliance of Host Organisations for research integrity, research misconduct frameworks through the Society's standard assurance policies.</li> <li>Review the bullying and harassment policy to better align with other funders, improve consistency of practice and clarify expectations for Host Organisations.</li> <li>We have also published a <a href="#">policy</a> that sets out the Society's commitment to a research culture where all involved in research activities are treated with dignity and respect and we continue to participate in UKRI's <a href="#">Forum for Tackling Bullying and Harassment</a>.</li> <li>We work closely with other Funders to ensure the best working conditions and support for PhD students. In August 2022, The Society approved a 13% increase to stipend of PhD students supported through its grants in light of the costs of living crisis.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>August 2022- Complete</p>

<p>Review the impact of relevant funding call requirements on researchers' employment, particularly in relation to career progression and lack of job security.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct and publish findings of a follow up Career Pathway Tracker to determine the impact of the Society's University Research and Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships on the career pathways and scientific achievements of our alumni.</li> <li>• Following the outcome of the evaluation of the University Research Fellowship scheme (URF), the Society has now implemented changes to the programme to simplify and clarify the process of extending the URF from five to eight years. These changes will include providing greater certainty on the length of the fellowship and the process of extending the fellowship to the full eight years.</li> <li>• The Society has also secured additional funding to extend the length of the Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships (DHF) from five to eight years in line with the changes implemented to the URFs. The DHF scheme offers a recognised first step into an independent research career for researchers who require a flexible working pattern due to personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities or health issues. Awards are usually held on a part-time basis and may include lengthy career breaks throughout the duration of the fellowship. The extension of funding to eight years will provide award holders with greater flexibility and financial security to deliver their research aims and build an independent career.</li> </ul>	<p>March 2024</p> <p>July 2022- Complete</p> <p>August 2022- Complete</p>

3: The Society recognises the importance of professional development and training opportunities as essential tools to develop the next generation of research leaders

<b>Concordat principle: Professional and Career Development</b>		
<b>Funder responsibilities</b>	<b>Action(s)</b>	<b>Timeline/Status</b>
<p>Incorporate specific professional development requirements in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal Society Early Career Researchers can use their fellowship funding to support their own career /professional training and the career development of members of their research team. The funding cap for training costs is up to £1000 per year for an 8-year Early Career Fellowship.</li> <li>• Continue to embed suitable processes to monitor reporting of career development activities of researchers through standard assurances procedures in addition to regular meetings with Heads of Departments.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p>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"> <li>• The Society's career development programmes offer its researchers opportunities to enhance their careers through training, mentoring, networking and partnership programmes<sup>3</sup>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ In 2022 we have refreshed the Society's leadership training and established a pilot for a new training course on "Introduction to Research Management". The course aims to help newly appointed Research Fellows to become resilient and effective line managers and build supportive research environments.</li> <li>◦ We continue to expand and improve our mentoring offerings by harnessing the power of the Fellowship, fellowship alumni and senior researchers to support early career researchers.</li> <li>◦ Development of a Research Fellows Portal that will act as a digital hub for information around career development themes, including hosting registration and resources to facilitate better planning and increase engagement with the programme. (Expected launch in August 2023)</li> <li>◦ We continue to support and empower female researchers to develop leadership skills through the training and mentoring opportunities offered by the SUSTAIN programme.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Embed the Concordat Principles and researcher development into research assessment strategies and processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We continue to work with Universities and Research Institutions to support the development of future research leaders. In June 2021, we developed an updated statement to set clear expectations regarding the Host Organisation's commitment of support to fellowship candidates:  <i>The Head of Department is required to summarise as part of their statement and organisation's commitment to the candidate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>The suitability of the candidate for the fellowship and department</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Set out how the host department/institution will provide the support, mentorship and guidance to enable the candidate to thrive in their career and research. And provide assurance that the fellow would have the same status and benefits as other academic staff of similar seniority.</i></li> <li>◦ <i>The effective and transparent arrangements that led to the applicant being supported to apply for the Royal Society fellowship.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>2021-Complete</p>
<p>Acknowledge that a large proportion of the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote its existing industry programmes and fellowships<sup>4</sup>, policy associate scheme<sup>5</sup> and training, as well as highlighting the varied routes research careers can take through its research culture work and case studies<sup>6</sup>.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<sup>3</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/training-mentoring-partnership-schemes/>

<sup>4</sup> Entrepreneur in Residence; Industry Fellowships; Short Industry Fellowship: <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/industry-innovation/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/policy-secondment-programme/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/research-culture/changing-expectations/career-case-studies/>

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"><li>• Work with the Careers Research Advisory Centre to develop a “Roadmap” for the different career paths in STEM.</li></ul>	
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