

Review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers Terms of Reference

Background

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (“The Concordat”)¹ is an agreement between funders and employers of research staff to improve the employment and support for researchers and research careers in UK higher education.

The Concordat was launched in 2008 and its implementation is overseen by the Concordat Strategy Group (CSG), whose members represent the major research funders and universities. Since 2011, Vitae have led on the management of the Concordat, with the CSG overseeing strategy and implementation. A three-year review of the implementation of the Concordat principles was carried out by Vitae in 2012. This was followed by a shorter progress report in 2014. In December 2015, funding was agreed for Vitae to continue its role in the UK implementation of the Concordat until the end of the financial year 2017/18.

The Concordat has not been updated since it was first published in 2008 and there have been many changes within the research system since then, as well as wider national and international developments. Thus, it is timely to carry out a ten-year review of the Concordat to ensure it fulfils its intended purpose from 2018 onwards.

Purpose of the review

- To review the impact of the Concordat since 2008, building on the outputs from previous reviews and evaluations, and evaluate progress in implementing the Concordat principles
- To consider the extent to which the Concordat has achieved its aims, and whether it remains fit for purpose or requires updating
- To provide advice and priorities to the Concordat Strategy Group on the required policy interventions relating to researcher career development to ensure an effective UK research system.

Exclusions

The review will not:

- review progress in implementing / embedding Concordat principles in **individual** research organisations;
- comment on other instruments (e.g. Athena SWAN, HR Excellence in Research Awards etc.) except in the context of their relationship with the Concordat.

Expert Review Panel Terms of Reference

The expert review panel will:

- Review existing evidence (from previous reviews as well as the CROS survey and other reports) and, if gaps exist, commission new evidence from key stakeholder groups (to be identified by the Panel) within the UK research sector on the implementation of the Concordat principles
- Review progress in implementing / embedding the Concordat principles, identifying examples of good practice from institutions and areas of complementarity / overlap

with other sector standards, including the HR Excellence in Research Award, Athena SWAN and the other Concordats

- Identify areas where further work in implementing / embedding the Concordat principles is required
- Consider the future audience for the Concordat and whether this should extend beyond research staff, for example to include technicians, early career academics, and researchers in other sectors
- Make recommendations on the future requirements of the Concordat, including (but not exclusively) whether the Concordat (or similar instrument) continues to have a role in supporting career development of researchers
- Provide recommendations for revised or new principles, where appropriate
- Identify priority activities to research organisations on how Concordat principles can be further embedded / implemented
- Make recommendations to the Concordat signatories on how future implementation of Concordat principles should be measured, monitored and supported

The panel will report into the Concordat Executive Group (CEG; a sub-group of the CSG) on the progress of the review. The CEG will provide guidance to the panel on any questions relating to the overall scope of the review. RCUK, on behalf of the CSG, will provide independent secretariat support to the panel and will act as the main point of contact between the Chair / panel and CEG.