



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan



Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan

The following plan outlines actions taken against the core funder and signatory requirements outlined in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and sets out future activities. Funder requirements are divided into three sections:

- a) Environment and culture.
- b) Employment.
- c) Professional and career development.

A. Funder requirements – Environment and culture

Funder requirements	Progress since 2021 Action Plan	Actions going forwards	Timeframe	Measures of success
1 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"> EIA assessment required for all SFC funded strategic projects and reporting requirements include request for information on how projects have contributed. EIA is also required for all new and updated SFC policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing 	Ongoing	SFC policies and procedures and strategic investments do not negatively impact on underrepresented groups.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Outcome Agreements (OAs) seek assurance that institutions are aligned to the principles of both the Researcher Development Concordat (RDC) and the Research Integrity Concordat (RIC) as a condition of grant for receipt of core research grants. From AY 2023/24, SFC required institutions to provide a statement on how REG supported research culture and environment in their OA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing. SFC is committed to working with the sector to better understand ways in which we can support positive research cultures across Scottish institutions, including through increasing the evidence we gather about institutional research environment and culture. From AY 2024-25 we will introduce new Research accountability and assurance (RAA) arrangements which build on current Outcome Agreements. In addition to the existing 	<p>Annual basis</p> <p>RAA from AY2024-25</p>	<p>All Scottish institutions are aligned to the Concordats principles.</p> <p>Better understanding of how REG and RPG support a positive research culture in institutions.</p> <p>Institutions working collaboratively to maximise impact.</p>

Funder requirements	Progress since 2021 Action Plan	Actions going forwards	Timeframe	Measures of success
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where appropriate SFC funded strategic projects are required to consider how they align to the principles of the Research Development Concordat as a condition of grant. 	<p>assurances around Concordat alignment and support for excellent research environment and positive research cultures we will seek greater accountability for the use of Research Postgraduate Grant through a series of agreed outcomes and case studies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will use this information to support policy development in this area and will explore areas for national activities Continuing 	<p>1-3 years</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All SFC supported strategic projects aligned to principles of the Concordat.</p>
2 Consider how funding opportunities and policies can facilitate different patterns and ways of working, and promote the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFC's Advisory Group on Supporting Scotland's Postgraduate Researchers met twice over AY 2023-24, with its final meeting taking place in January 2024. The Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory Group discussion will inform policy development and the Group Members have agreed to remain an informal source of advice and support as SFC's wider 	1-2 years	Better understanding of good researcher development practise and barriers and opportunities.

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wellbeing and mental health of researchers.	<p>explored good researcher development practice and opportunities for supporting postgraduate researchers across Scotland, potential links to projects taking place elsewhere in the UK, and gaps in existing PGR data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFC have engaged extensively with the sector on research culture through participation and contribution to Universities Scotland's Researcher Development and Culture Committee (RDCC), the Scottish Research Integrity Network, and Open Research Scotland, and regular engagement with VPRs or equivalent as well as through the OA process. 	<p>Research Culture activity develops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing - SFC will continue to work with the sector to better understand existing barriers and opportunities and explore ways in which we can support research culture across Scottish institutions. 	3 – 5 years	Institutions working collaboratively to maximise impact.
3 Ensure that funding call requirements and selection processes offer equality of opportunity between different groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFC do not directly fund researchers however we promote equality of opportunity and positive research cultures within institutions by seeking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing. SFC to explore opportunities to further promote positive research cultures and explore potential for national activities. 	1 – 2 years	Better understanding of excellent research environment and positive research cultures and the

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of researchers, recognise personal contexts, and promote positive research cultures and working conditions.	<p>assurance of alignment with the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat and evidence of support for excellent research environment and positive research cultures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued engagement with the sector on research culture through participation and contribution to Universities Scotland's Researcher Development and Culture Committee (RDCC), the Scottish Research Integrity Network, and Open Research Scotland, and regular engagement with VPRs or equivalent as well as through the OA process. SFC is an active member of the National Forum on Tackling Bullying and Harassment in R&I. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with the sector to better understand ways in which we can support research culture across Scottish institutions. Continue to engage with work of National Forum and contribute to its activities. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>barriers and opportunities. Institutions working collaboratively to maximise impact.</p>

B. Funder Requirements – Employment

Funder requirements	Actions taken	Recommended Actions/Review Recommendations	Timeframe	Measures of success
1 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"> Annual Outcome Agreements (OAs) seek assurance that institutions are aligned to the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat as a condition of grant for receipt of core research grants. OAs also seek assurance that institutions act in accordance with Scottish Government's Fair Work guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing/ RAA from AY2024-25 	Annual	All Scottish institutions are aligned to the Concordat principles and act in accordance with the Scottish Government's Fair Work guidance.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where appropriate SFC funded strategic projects are required to consider how they align to the principles of the Research Development Concordat as a condition of grant. SFC funded strategic projects are also required to act in accordance with Scottish Government's Fair Work guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing 	Ongoing	All SFC funded strategic projects are aligned to the Concordat principles and act in accordance with the Scottish Government's Fair Work guidance.

Funder requirements	Actions taken	Recommended Actions/Review <i>Recommendations</i>	Timeframe	Measures of success
2 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"> SFC do not fund researchers directly but will engage with other funders (e.g. UKRI) and relevant stakeholders regarding their work within this space to standardise processes and expectations SFC's PGR Advisory Group was established to provide SFC with expert advice on postgraduate research, with a particular focus on the purpose and future accountability approach for SFC's Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing Introduction of greater accountability for Researcher Postgraduate Grant from AY 2024-25 through RAA. 	Ongoing From AY 2024-25	
3 Support institutions to develop policies and frameworks to promote sustainable employment arrangements and enhance job security, and provide opportunities for career progression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support institutions to act in accordance with Scottish Government Fair Work guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing SFC will engage with Researcher Development Concordat secretariat on development of fairness of employment good practice guide. 	Ongoing 1 – 2 years	
4 Consider the balance of their relevant funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance of REG/ RPG considered as part of review in 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any available additional funding from AY 2024-25 will be allocated 	From AY 2024-25	

Funder requirements	Actions taken	Recommended Actions/ <i>Review Recommendations</i>	Timeframe	Measures of success
streams in providing access to research funding and its impact at all career levels.		<p>through Research Excellence Grant with supporting excellent research environment and positive research cultures encouraged as an encouraged focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with funders, HEIs, and other sector stakeholders to map sector-wide provision, identify gaps, and explore new funding options. 	Ongoing	

C. Funder Requirements - Professional and career development

Funder requirements	Actions taken	Recommended Actions	Timeframe	Measures of success
1 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Outcome Agreements (OAs) seek assurance that institutions are aligned to the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat as a condition of grant for receipt of core research grants. • Where appropriate SFC funded strategic projects are required to consider how they align to the principles of the Research Development Concordat as a condition of grant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing/ RAA from 2024-25 	Annual Ongoing	
2 Embed the Concordat Principles and researcher development into research assessment strategies and processes.	SFC worked with other FBs through the Future Research Assessment Programme and the REF 2029 Steering Group to develop plans for REF 2029 which include a greater focus on People, Culture and Environment.	Continued development of the assessment of People, Culture and Environment within REF 2029 in consultation with sector to reflect Concordat principles.	3-5 years	Consultation with sector incorporated into REF 2029 guidance. Clear guidance within REF 2029 which reflects Concordat Principles.

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3 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"> SFC's Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) provides support for the environment needed for high quality research training and supports postgraduate research students to contribute to research in Scotland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will re-state the purpose of the RPG to include support for postgraduates to acquire the skills to develop careers in or outside of academia, and explore ways to support collaboration between universities in areas of researcher support and development. 	1-2yrs	Researchers better supported to prepare for a wide range of career options.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Converge Challenge which includes the provision of educational events and entrepreneurship training for participants across all universities in Scotland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing 	Ongoing	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support SGSSS and SGSAH Graduate Schools to engage with a broad range of employers and offer a range of work experience options and internships to students 	Continuing	Ongoing	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting academic expertise with industry, our ICs provide significant skills development support and opportunities to researchers. IC MSc places offer 	Continuing	Ongoing	

Funder requirements	Actions taken	Recommended Actions	Timeframe	Measures of success
	industrial placements that serve to deliver the skills needed by industry and enhance the employability of university students. Over 1800 MSc places have been delivered by the IC programme to date.	Work with institutions to take forward recommendations in the Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint particularly around development and provision of entrepreneurial curriculum and training to aspiring academic entrepreneurs, both within a classroom setting as well as practical entrepreneurial learning opportunities.		

D. Signatory Requirements

Signatory Responsibilities	Actions taken	Recommended Actions	Timeframe	Measures of success
1. Raise the visibility of the Concordat and champion	SFC webpage makes a public commitment to the Concordat.	Continue to consider ways in which SFC can embed the concordat's principles in policy and practise.	Ongoing	SFC's commitment to the concordat is embedded in policy and practice and

Signatory Responsibilities	Actions taken	Recommended Actions	Timeframe	Measures of success
its Principles within their organisation at all levels.	Outcome agreement guidance/ strategic funding conditions of grant include requirement to comply with Concordat.	Continue to publicly support the Concordat as a signatory and as a member of the signatories group contribute to and participate in the annual forum.		visible across the organisation.
2. Identify a senior manager champion and associated group with relevant representation from across the organisation with responsibility for annual review and reporting on progress.	Assistant Director Research appointed as Senior Manager Champion. Research team within R&I directorate responsible for producing annual review.	R&I research team to coordinate across SFC to produce annual review and reporting on progress.	Yearly	Annual review published yearly on SFC website.
3. For organisations employing researchers, ensure that they are formally represented in developing and monitoring organisational efforts to implement the Concordat Principles.	n/a	Review as appropriate	Ongoing	
4. Undertake a gap analysis to compare their policies and practice against the Concordat Principles.	In response to gap analysis alignment with Concordat was introduced as a condition of grant for	Research team to schedule regular review of SFC policies/processes to ensure compliance with Concordat.	Review of policies: yearly, to feed into	SFC policies and practice are aligned with Concordat principles.

Signatory Responsibilities	Actions taken	Recommended Actions	Timeframe	Measures of success
	relevant strategic projects from AY 2023-24.		annual statement.	
5. Draw up and publish an action plan within a year of signing up to Concordat.	Action plan signed off by SFC's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and made available on SFC website in August 2021. Revised action plan considered by RKEC April 2024.	Once signed off publish on SFC website	Every three years	Action plan published and clearly visible on SFC website.
6. Set up processes for systematically and regularly gathering the views of the researchers they fund or employ, to inform and improve the organisation's approach to and progress on implementing the Concordat.	n/a – researchers not directly funded/employed via SFC.	n/a	n/a	n/a
7. Produce an annual report to their governing body or equivalent authority, which includes their strategic objectives,	Last annual report published August 2023.	Annual	Annual report: Yearly	Annual report, including strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plan and

Signatory Responsibilities	Actions taken	Recommended Actions	Timeframe	Measures of success
	measures of success, implementation plan and progress, which is subsequently publicly available.			progress publicly available on SFC website.