



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

Concordat  
to support  
the Career  
Development  
of Researchers:  
Action Plan  
2025-30

# ACHIEVEMENTS VIA CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN 2022 – 2025

Actively  
welcomed  
**731**  
researchers  
to Oxford

Created the  
Charter for  
the Career  
Development  
of Researchers

Created the  
Oxford  
Researcher's  
Trailmap  
for timely  
wellbeing,  
research and  
careers support

Ensured  
researchers  
contribute to  
University  
decision-making

Delivered  
Careers Advice via  
**2176+**  
1:1 appointments and  
**960+**  
careers events

**350+**  
events hosted by  
Oxford Research  
Staff Society

Guided researchers  
in planning their  
professional  
development



Illustrated  
diverse  
destinations via  
**155+**  
profiles on  
research-  
careers.org

Developed resources  
to support Career  
Development

Shown  
recognition  
through the  
Vice  
Chancellor's  
awards

Provided  
**160+**  
workshops  
for tomorrow's  
research leaders

Grown researcher  
enrolment to Career  
Connect from  
**20% to 57%**



# FOREWORD

*“The quality and impact of our research depends increasingly on creative people working together effectively, united by a commitment to rigour and openness, and an enthusiasm to support each other’s future success. Our people make our environment.” – Professor Patrick Grant, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research.*

This plan builds on the achievements of our first 3-year action plan (2022–2025) to fulfil institutional commitments to the National Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and to strengthen research culture more broadly.

Since 2022, internal policies, systems, and provision have been established to enable researchers across the University to readily identify and pursue opportunities for their professional and career development, while working in a supportive, inclusive, and equitable environment. Outcomes of the first action plan include a strong researcher representation structure, mechanisms to support researcher access to tailored professional development and career guidance, and opportunities for principal investigators and academic managers to grow their people management and leadership skills towards pro-actively supporting the career development of researchers. Our Charter (2024) brings these and other Concordat provision to life by summarising what researchers can expect of the institution and of their academic managers, and where their own responsibilities lie.

Over the next five years, we will focus on nine objectives detailed below, while prioritising those that stand to make the greatest difference to the greatest number of researchers. These are equipping academic managers/PIs appropriately, enabling routine researcher engagement in effective professional development and Career Development Reviews, and re-shaping employment approaches for staff on external research funding.

How will we achieve these objectives? The University’s first People Strategy includes implementing this Concordat Action Plan in order to create the conditions for researchers to advance a range of career goals. In addition, the Collegiate University’s EDI Strategic Plan explicitly supports Concordat priorities, reinforcing accessible, inclusive and equitable delivery across the nine objectives.

Practically speaking, we will continue to draw on specialist insight and collaboration, specifically the growing expertise in divisions and departments in understanding what works for researchers and their supporting colleagues, where the barriers lie, and how to address these. We will also sustain our coordinated approach to the co-development of new guidance, systems and signposting, and to tracking our progress.

In summary, the action plan affirms our commitment to share our work with the sector and with funders to achieve the conditions “required to create the very best culture for our researchers to thrive” alongside “working practices and clear responsibilities, vital to increase the appeal and sustainability of researcher careers in the UK” as specified in the national Concordat.

We are very grateful to all colleagues across the University involved in the realisation of our commitments.



**Professor Patrick Grant**, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research



**Dr Markos Koumaditis**, Director of Human Resources

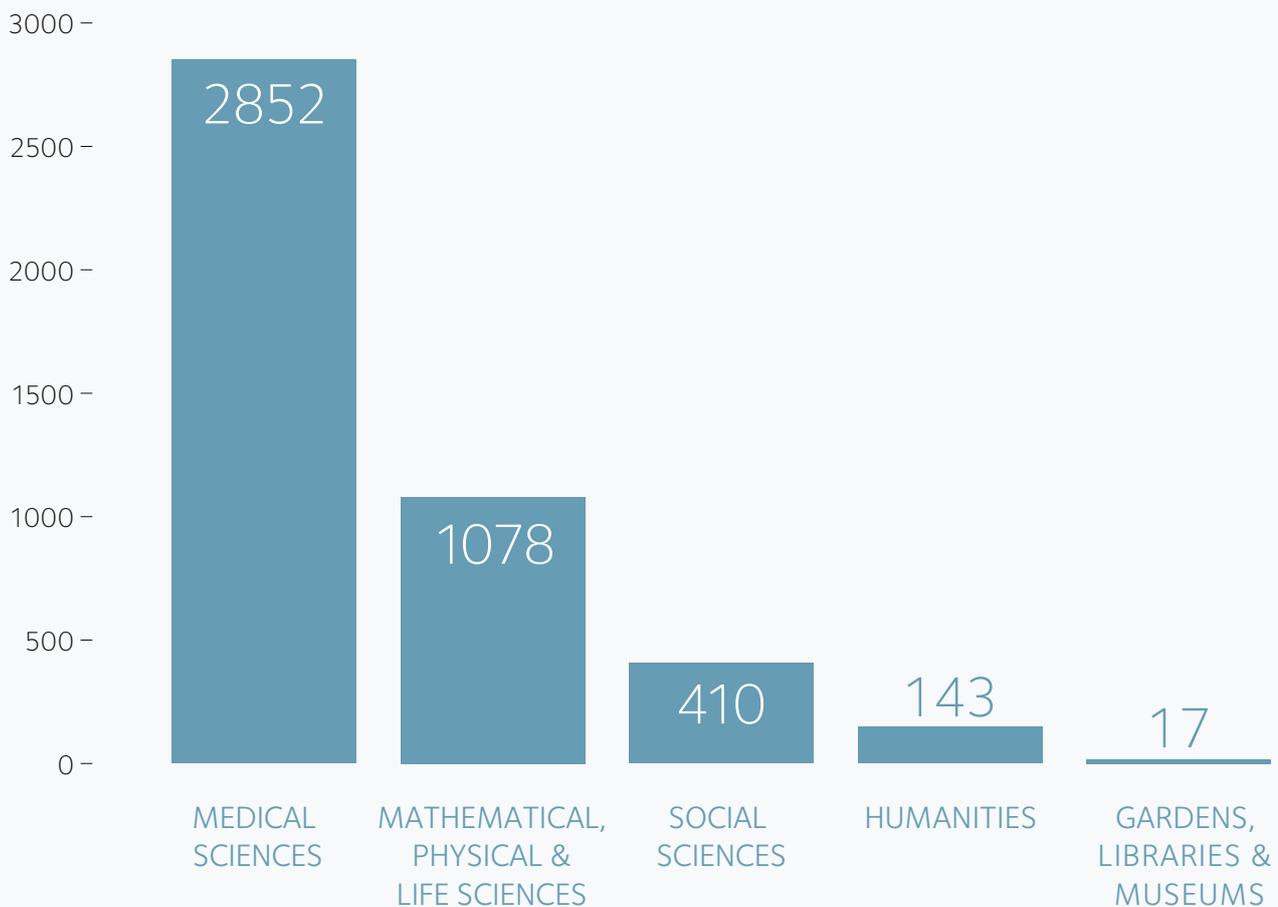
## Our researcher community

This action plan applies to the approximately 4,000 researchers employed by the University of Oxford on external funding, mostly at the post-doctoral level and distributed across disciplines as shown in Chart 1. There are also over 300 fixed-term researchers employed by colleges.

We are fortunate that some of the brightest minds come to the University from across the globe (49% of fixed-term researchers are not UK citizens) to conduct their cutting-edge research, making a major contribution to the University's position as one of the world's leading research-intensive universities. In 2024, the legal sex ratio of our fixed-term researchers was 49% female and 51% male, and the majority (71% of females and 74% of males) were under 39 years of age. Amongst UK researchers, 79% identified as White and 17% as Black or Minority Ethnic (BME); the largest groups being British-Indian (4%) and British-Chinese (3%). For non-UK researchers, 49% identified as White, and 46% as BME; the largest ethnic groups being Asian-Chinese (18%) and Asian-Indian (8%).

Across the University, fixed-term researchers perform a wide array of research roles. Most are at an early stage in their research careers and a substantial proportion have contributed to the University's research effort for a sustained period.

**Chart 1: Research Staff Headcounts (HESA return 2023/24)**



# CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN 2025–2030

This action plan guides work across the University towards realising our vision “for Oxford to be known as the place where researchers come to conduct state-of-the-art research and build their careers”, with the related commitments to:

- attract the best candidates to research roles and that they apply the highest standards of research practice,
- increase the diversity of people progressing in a range of academic roles,
- sustain a supportive environment, and
- reduce precarity.

With the exception of diversifying academic progression, these aspirations are not new to the current plan. More work is needed to embed progress in all areas of the university, address equity, and to tackle structural and cultural challenges.

Continued investment is also needed to maintain and strengthen core structures and provision to researchers and their academic managers established under the first action plan (2022–2025), especially environments of shrinking resources and rising pressures on all teams to perform in many areas.

**This diagram summarises where we will maintain, strengthen, and focus our efforts in 2025–2030:**



The plan focuses on nine objectives under the three national Concordat themes in the tables below; the objectives in bold type are the priority areas.

### 1. Environment and culture

- a. Further equip PIs/managers appropriately in inclusive management and leadership skills, beginning with effective recruitment of research staff by the PI/manager and panel
- b. Strengthen the researcher representation framework and effectiveness of governance
- c. Ensure support for the mental, physical and social wellbeing of researchers within provision for all staff

### 2. Employment

- a. Reshape employment approaches for researchers at Oxford and clarify internal career structures
- b. Improve engagement in and effectiveness of inductions and signposting to key resources
- c. Enable researchers to raise concerns relating to behaviour and equitable treatment early, and to receive support with the aim of resolution, thereby providing a realistic choice as to whether to report formally

### 3. Career development

- a. Achieve routine engagement in annual reviews focusing on career and professional development (CDRs/PDRs or equivalent) and continue improving their effectiveness
- b. Achieve routine researcher engagement in professional development** and the sustained provision of relevant development opportunities
- c. Strengthen researcher career mobility; including into and out of academic roles

## Duration and review points

The proposed plan is from 2025 to 2030 in order to align with the University Strategic Plan (in development at the time of writing), provide time to tackle more challenging structural and cultural issues, and allow activities to be sequenced and reviewed in light of changing priorities or resource levels. Measures of success and priority activities will be reviewed in April 2027 (year two) and in April 2029 (year four) in order to respond to innovation and change within the institutional and broader economic environment.

## Scope

The Concordat Action Plan commitments and Oxford's related Charter to support the Career Development of Researchers apply at a minimum to staff employed by the University:

- whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed specifically for this purpose, or who are expected in their contracts to conduct research, and
- who are employed on fixed-term contracts or open-ended externally-funded contracts, and
- who are employed on grade 6–9 (inclusive) posts and typically in the early stages of their research careers.

Several lines of information and support such as pre-arrival welcome videos, central inductions, signposting to key resources, professional development courses, and the Careers Service are open to a wider group of researchers, including those employed by colleges (e.g. as Junior Research Fellows), who are encouraged to talk to their College about any provision to support researchers in their career development.

It is anticipated that colleges will take similar steps towards fulfilling Concordat principles, noting that progress in departments/faculties is likely to be faster and broader.

## Governance and coordination

Research and Innovation Committee (RIC) and People Committee approved this action plan on 6 March 2025. The PVC Research, who is also chair of RIC, is ultimately accountable for its delivery. Responsibility for coordinating delivery and reporting on progress sits with the Researcher Hub and the Research Strategy and Policy Unit. Lead units for each objective are responsible for monitoring progress and adjusting inputs or activities accordingly.

It is envisaged that lead and partner units will work as 'distributed teams', continuing or initiating effective collaboration towards each objective. The relevant member of lead units for each objective will sit on Research Staff Working Group so that progress, opportunities and challenges across the action plan can be reviewed in termly meetings.

## Delivery

Lead units have primary responsibility for:

- setting direction, including defining activities to achieve objectives
- actively applying equality and inclusion principles in all activities, specifically to address less visible barriers to progression for research staff<sup>1</sup> (including an Equality Impact Assessment for all projects within the plan);
- working with researcher representatives, local networks, and supporting colleagues (Academic Advocates, Professional Service leads etc);
- innovating, learning and sharing internally and with the sector;
- communicating developments in policy or practice;
- coordinating activity via Research Staff Working Group and using an agreed platform (e.g. Teams channel) to share updates, information and ideas for improvement;
- monitoring progress via Research Staff Working Group, and reporting on progress to the specific objective (including contribution to annual institutional report).

Partner units will contribute to identifying activities, ensuring that they are applicable across the researcher population and will complement existing strategies or implementation. It is anticipated that further units (e.g. departments and faculties) will also contribute to delivery, and Lead/Partner units will map who needs to be involved at different stages.

In parallel, departments/faculties are being supported in identifying and responding to opportunities for strengthening practice through periodic Research Culture Toolkit conversations with divisional Research Culture Facilitators and the Toolkit resources on Sharepoint.

## Monitoring and evaluation

The measures of success are largely based on available Staff Experience Survey data, noting that their analysis will need to attend to other potential contributory factors than the culture-strengthening processes outlined in this plan. Any further appropriate metrics identified by leads can be considered as substitute or additional measures during year 2 and year 4 reviews. Scores will be analysed for the university and at divisional level.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of less visible barriers are documented in the 2023 report on Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding.

**1) Environment and Culture:** In order to enable all researchers to work in a supportive, inclusive working environment and culture, we will:

OBJECTIVES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIME-FRAME
<b>a. Further equip PIs/academic managers in inclusive management and leadership skills, beginning with effective recruitment by the PI/manager and panel</b>	<p>75% researchers report positive experiences of being managed (from an average score of 64% across 4 questions pertaining to specific behaviours in 2023 Staff Experience Survey (SES))</p> <p>All new PIs/managers engage in management training before recruiting first employees</p>	<p>Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division</p> <p>(Humanities on line manager identification)</p>	<p>Further Divisions</p> <p>People and Organisational Development (POD) to deliver management training</p> <p>Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU); Recruitment; Employer Relations in People Dept</p>	2025–2029 (y4)
<b>b. Strengthen the researcher representation framework and effectiveness of governance</b>	75% of researcher representatives fulfilling their roles effectively and contributing to decision-making (via self-reporting on ability to fulfil their roles in departments/faculties or on University-level committee)	Researcher Hub	Divisions EDU	2025–2026 (y1)
<b>c. Ensure support for the mental, physical and social wellbeing of researchers within provision for all staff</b>	<p>Provisionally (TBC May 2025 within Thriving at Oxford Action Plan):</p> <p>All departments have recruited at least two wellbeing champions equipped to signpost to a range of resources relevant to researchers, including on mental health awareness</p>	People: Wellbeing Team	Divisions EDU, POD OxRSS	2025–2027 (y2)

**2) Employment:** In order to ensure that all researchers are recruited, employed and managed under conditions that value and recognise their contributions, we will:

OBJECTIVE(S)	MEASURES OF SUCCESS	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIME-FRAME
<b>a. Reshape employment approaches for researchers at Oxford and clarify internal career structures</b>	<p>Proposals scoped and approved at Y1</p> <p>Internal employment approaches and career structures developed that are appropriate to different staff groups</p> <p>Related career structures understood by researchers, Pls/academic managers and HR teams</p> <p>Reduced reliance on successive fixed-term contracts</p> <p>Progression into research and academic roles within and beyond Oxford increasingly reflects diversity (by disability, gender, ethnicity and where possible socio-economic status) in national demographics and Russell Group targets</p>	<p>Medical Sciences Division (MSD)</p> <p>Guided by PVC (Research), and cross-functional coordination group</p>	<p>Divisions</p> <p>People teams: Policy; Workforce Planning; Reward; Recruitment; Systems in People Dept</p> <p>Academic Career and Reward Framework Steering Group</p> <p>Research Staff Working Group Chairs &amp; Research Staff Consultation Group members</p>	2025–2029 (y4)
<b>b. Improve engagement in and effectiveness of inductions and signposting to key resources</b>	<p>60% new researchers participating in University induction (from 30% in Academic Year 2023/24)</p> <p>75% researchers report induction received within last 18 months as useful (from 51% in SES 2023)</p>	POD	<p>Divisions</p> <p>EDU</p>	2025–2027 (y2)
<b>c. Enable researchers to raise concerns about behaviour and equitable treatment early, and to receive advice and support with the aim of resolution; thereby providing a realistic choice as to whether to report formally</b>	<p>Coherent local and central approaches to promoting the values and behaviours inherent to a positive culture in a world-leading institution, guided by the EDI and People strategies; measured by consensus in all three central research staff committees informed by regular People Strategy updates</p> <p>95% researchers are aware of the harassment policy and procedure for university staff; noting these apply across the academic community including third parties (from 86% in 2023 SES)</p> <p>75% researchers report feeling safe to speak up and challenge the way things are done (from 52% in 2023 SES)</p>	University Academic Advocate	<p>People teams: Employer Relations; Policy; EDU in People Dept</p> <p>Divisional HR &amp; HR Business Partners</p>	2025–2027 (y2)

**3) Career Development:** In recognition that professional and career development are integral to enabling researchers to develop their full potential, we will:

OBJECTIVE(S)	MEASURES OF SUCCESS	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIME-FRAME
<b>a. Achieve routine engagement in annual reviews focusing on career and professional development (CDRs/PDRs or equivalent) and continue improving their effectiveness</b>	<p>75% researchers engage in CDR (from 57% in SES 2023)</p> <p>95% of departments/faculties are routinely offering an annual career-focused conversation</p> <p>75% researchers report CDR as useful (from 64% in SES 2023)</p>	Social Sciences Division	<p>Divisions</p> <p>Systems team in People Dept</p> <p>Researcher Hub</p> <p>POD</p>	2025–2028 (y3)
<b>b. Achieve routine researcher engagement in professional development and the sustained provision of relevant development opportunities</b>	<p>50% researchers taking at least 10 days professional development (from 14% in SES 2023)</p> <p>75% researchers reporting opportunity to develop and grow at the University (from 64% 2023)</p>	Researcher Hub	<p>Divisions</p> <p>Research Practice team (Research Services), Careers Service, POD, EnSpire, Oxford Policy Engagement Network; Centre for Teaching &amp; Learning; IT Learning; Bodleian Libraries</p> <p>Systems team in People Dept</p>	2025–2028 (y3)
<b>c. Strengthen researcher career mobility; including into and out of academic roles</b>	<p>Diverse researcher career destinations illustrated to current researchers, including entry-points and the role of professional development in enabling progression</p> <p>Progress made in sustainable mechanisms to strengthen career mobility that include timely information and support</p>	Researcher Hub/ Careers Service	<p>Divisions (including business teams)</p> <p>Oxford Policy Engagement Network, EnSpire; Innovation &amp; Engagement Team; Oxford University Innovation</p> <p>IT Services, Systems team in People Dept</p> <p>Centre for Teaching and Learning; Education Policy Support; Education Committee</p>	2025–2029 (y4)

## Reporting schedule and modality

Progress against actions will be reported annually every April from the publication of this action plan through one document submitted to the following University-level committees.

### For interim approval:

- Research Staff Consultation Group (comprising fixed-term researchers)
- Research Staff Steering Committee (governing activity for fixed-term researchers)

### For final approval:

- Research and Innovation Committee
- People Committee

Action updates will be posted on the Researcher Hub website after final approval by Research and Innovation Committee and People Committee. An annual implementation report written by the Researcher Hub and the Research Strategy & Policy Unit will provide accountability to the plan and guidance on any required revisions.

## Development of this action plan

This action plan was informed by institutional progress on the Concordat Action Plan 2022–2025 and the people priorities for 2025–2030. It was developed in consultation with researcher, academic, and professional service colleagues in divisions and central teams, and externally reviewed by the following colleagues: Senior Director, Scientific Innovation Immunology, Johnson & Johnson; Partner for Life Sciences, Oxford Science Enterprises; Senior Talent Programme Manager, UKRI; Head of the Postdoc Academy, University of Cambridge; Head of Research Culture, University of Cambridge.



# FURTHER INFORMATION

## **The University's programme to strengthen research culture**

[www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/research-culture-oxford](http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/research-culture-oxford)

## **The University's Researcher Hub**

[www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub](http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub)

## **The University's Research Staff Committees**

[www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/research-staff-committees](http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/research-staff-committees)

## **Research Staff Representatives across the University**

[www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/research-staff-representatives](http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/research-staff-representatives)