

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Universities and Research Institutes

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Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers (max 500 words)

In our most recent strategy, Strategy 2026, we have outlined in the Thriving Staff Community section how “Our people are at the heart of King’s strategic ambitions”. This entails us actively cultivating an inclusive and welcoming community that respects individual differences and values collaboration. As part of this strategy, King’s has set up a high level Staff and Culture Strategy Committee whose members include research staff and students and that contributes to governance by monitoring progress on achieving agreed objectives.

We now have an established central department and multiple faculty-based posts addressing research culture. A key project that will start this year is to enhance equality and inclusion and increase the numbers of minorities in more senior roles at King’s. Each faculty also has its own local plan addressing research culture, one example of which is to support the experience and career development of research staff. We also work within the sector more widely, contributing to research culture communities and policy and practice, for example the current People, Culture and Environment aspect of the REF.

We regularly review our policies and procedures in line with current good practice, delivered with input from the unions and relevant staff. Current examples include how we manage requests for transfer to an open contract after 4 years of continuous employment. Our investment into “Report + Support”, a mechanism for managing all aspects of bullying, harassment and victimisation, is enabling us to improve our responses to this important issue. Using “Our Principles in Action”, a set of behavioural competencies that support positive interactions between our staff and students, also demonstrates our aspirations with regard to the culture we espouse.

In 2016 we established the Centre for Research Staff Development (CRSD) to provide professional development and to engage in policy and best practice for research staff. This centre is now well established and is seen as an important hub for research staff issues and information. In tandem with the CRSD we also have a team of careers consultants dedicated to support research staff in their career planning and development.

King’s is a signatory to a number of initiatives that support a positive research culture, including The Concordats to Support the Career Development of Researchers and Research Integrity, The Technician Commitment and the San

Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. We hold Athena SWAN Silver Awards at Institutional and Faculty level, a Bronze Race Equality Charter Mark and the HR Excellence in Research Award.

We routinely carry out surveys of research staff, the last one being in 2023 alongside an All Staff Survey that demonstrated we are focusing on required initiatives. These surveys also enable us to monitor long-term trends in our efforts to uphold the principles espoused by the Researcher Development Concordat.

In the last four years we have increased our resources to support wellbeing, including courses for staff and their managers and online information for all. There are also significant workload evaluation and management projects being carried out to minimise poor practice in this area.

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success (max 600 words)

Strategic Objectives and monitoring

King's College London is now in its 12th year of receipt of the HR Excellence in Research Award, demonstrating our commitment to upholding the principles described in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. We have described a variety of actions, with more detail available in the [action plan for this award](#). Critically, much of the work that we do is now considered business-as-usual as our implementation of a large number of the principles is longstanding. We are now focussing on projects that will bring new and substantial change.

King's has made a commitment in [Strategy 2026](#) to "Enhance our research culture, focusing on research careers in academia and beyond, supporting ethical, open research and research-enhanced education."

Opinions and viewpoints held by our research staff are gathered biennially through a college-wide survey of Research Staff (last run in 2023) and via the Research Staff Representative Committee (RSRC). In 2023 we also had an All Staff Survey. Faculties also carry out local evaluations. These enable monitoring of trends in how staff experience their time at King's and the success of the action plan.

Environment and culture

Our Positive Workplace Initiatives is a central programme to address leadership, Training & Awareness Raising, Reporting, Monitoring & Support and Reward, Retention & Recognition. Embedded within this is "Active Bystander Training", designed to enable staff to understand what is meant by Bullying and Harassment (B&H) and how to address it.

We have also invested in a new central system, “Report + Support”, to guide those seeking information and wishing to record incidents. This has been running since October 2022 and has proved popular. Locally, faculties are appointing “Confidential Advisors” as first responders to incidents and to address governance and monitoring.

Faculty-led and central training programmes addressing environment and culture included in the action plan cover Mental Health First Aid Training and specifically “Diversity THRIVE” for those from racial or other minority backgrounds being piloted in one faculty. This will be rolled out across the university as part of the INKLUDE Project run by the central Research Culture team.

Employment

Our priority employment project has been to review the use of fixed-term contracts (FTCs). Progress in this project has been evaluated by completion of key stages, e.g. research goals, internal processes reviewed.

There is new central training for Managers of research staff incorporating the “Managers Toolkit” and local training for line managers offered within specific faculties, along with data gathering on attendance and uptake.

The process for promotion of research staff remains opaque and inaccessible to research staff. Our future approach will focus on providing insight into what options are available.

Professional Development of Researchers

Professional development opportunities for managers around their obligations to researchers is generally increasing across the university. Specifically included in this action plan is a new course developed by the CRSD in collaboration with managers that also touches on the use of the Managers Toolkit, with increasing attendances from the first to second year.

Our dedicated Researcher Careers Team have established new courses and resources in this action plan addressing careers both within and outside of the academic environment.

To encourage research staff to gain new skills one faculty has created an award scheme recognising contributions to wider agendas, e.g. committees and project leadership, now copied by other faculties. We have also set up an award to recognise contributions to postgraduate research project supervision by research staff. These projects are monitored and evaluated by participation. In addition, we have reestablished funding to cover the cost of professional registration through the Science Council to encourage engagement with professional development among our technical community.

<p>Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/PIs); Researchers]</p>	
<p>Environment and Culture (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>Positive Workplace Initiatives</p> <p>Establishment of a central “Strategic Programme Manager – Preventing and Addressing B&H” post to take forward actions and interventions to support staff and students enabled improved management of cases</p> <p>Report and Support launched in October 2022. This is now fully integrated into King’s systems and the number of reports is increasing, with many where individuals are named now resulting in investigations and resolutions. Unnamed reporting is also providing information about repeated patterns by individuals and within specific locations, which will enable increased opportunities to address issues.</p> <p>Active Bystander training continues to be popular and now includes guidance and scripts for managers dealing with B&H. A B&H toolkit is under development, to be launched in September 2024.</p> <p>One faculty has been carrying out qualitative research with their staff on their perception of research culture in their faculty and have incorporated findings into an action plan based on the results.</p> <p>One faculty is also working towards raising awareness of what B&H is and how King’s deals with it. The role of their Research Integrity Advisors is being made more visible and all the Advisors are fully aware of resources such as “Report + Support”. The appointment of a new Research Integrity Facilitator will enable evaluation of how effective these roles are.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>One faculty has initiated a “Catalyst Project” that saw an event held in early 2024 at which inclusivity of job roles was encouraged, rated 4.19/5, additional research staff events, and an improved induction process. Initial stages of the project are now concluded with new roles created for the next phase.</p>

	<p>Within one faculty Confidential Advisors were appointed in May 2023. Over the last year they have been shown to have a positive impact on B&H. Their appointment is following on from the success of similar posts in a separate faculty.</p> <p>One faculty is working on an EDI action plan with a specific strategic group to address workload, flexible working and long working hours. Initially delayed this work has now recommenced following appointment of a new Associate Dean, resulting in enhanced training availability.</p> <p>One faculty has set up an EDI hub that includes details of all training and awareness courses available online, now also linked to dedicated people and culture pages, impact to be addressed in the next year.</p> <p>One faculty hosted a mindfulness, wellbeing and time management event with inclusivity at its heart. This included speed talks by colleagues at all levels and backgrounds to encourage inclusivity. The event exceeded attendance expectations.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Two faculties have created dedicated Sharepoint hubs to be a central portal for all relevant information their Research Staff need. One includes links to induction materials with views steadily increasing, currently 500, the other is used regularly for signposting. One other faculty now holds regular annual events to raise awareness of available resources, the most recent one having received 25/26 rating for attending again.</p> <p>Mental Health First Aid Training has been so successful that courses are now provided centrally, improving access to all across the university.</p> <p>Diversity THRIVE, a training programme for researchers from racial or other minority backgrounds, has been successfully developed in one faculty. The programme is now being rolled out across the university as part of a Wellcome funded project to improve recruitment and retention of minorities.</p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p>

We have carried out an extensive review of the use of FTCs at our own and other universities. When open contracts have been offered with a limited by funding clause research staff have viewed them as disingenuous. Consequently we have moved to a new approach of ensuring that our processes around the use of FTCs are transparent, equitable and applied fairly. The first stages of this project are almost complete with extensive revisions being made to existing processes. Following implementation of phase 1 that addresses changes to requirements at 4 years of employment we will move to a second phase exploring improvement in contract length.

HR are also addressing the use of FTCs by raising awareness among managers of the appropriate process for contract termination. A new tool created for redeployment has been rolled out in autumn 2023.

Inductions are variable across the university and many staff tell us that they are not aware of what is available to them. The CRSD and RSRC have been working together to generate new resources, which will be available towards the end of 2024. One faculty has been piloting a researcher-supervisor agreement signed during induction. Awareness of this document is now rising with 7/11 of the latest recruits having signed it and other faculties considering adopting it

Other faculties have been updating or enhancing their induction programme, creating induction packs and buddy schemes and focusing on specific topics relating to research staff.

Mentoring and buddying continues to be on the agenda but uptake is lower than anticipated. This may have an impact on the willingness of faculties to devote time to running such programmes, although they remain a popular concept.

One faculty has created an App for use in monitoring uptake of PDRs now into the 3rd year of use. This has provided accurate data, e.g. % take up, enabling the faculty to target areas where improvements are required. Use of the app will be reviewed annually.

Academic Managers of Researchers

	<p>Uptake of the <u>Managers Toolkit</u> is still low and evaluation has yet to be carried out, although there appears to be greater awareness of its existence.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Promotion processes for academic and research staff vary. One faculty has merged local processes to create a consistent faculty policy. Research staff continue to request clarity and opportunities in this area, making it something that King's should address.</p> <p>In early 2023 we initiated the Mentoring and Support Awards for those who have given support to PGR students beyond their official role. The first round resulted in 4 nominations and 2 winners from the research staff community and the award will be continued annually.</p> <p>Research staff and those who manage them continue to have mixed levels of awareness of their right to 10 days per year to devote to professional development. Between surveys in 2021 and 2023 there was an increase from 6 to 8 out of 10 considering that they spend at least 1 day a month on professional development. Although King's is going in the right direction we intend to initiate a new campaign to highlight this right.</p> <p>For one faculty, appointing a Learning & Development Champion was expected to address this issue. After an initial delay the Champion has been appointed and we expect progress to be made.</p> <p>One faculty has set up funding for professional development beyond the internal programme. This has proved popular and are now widely applied for, with research staff being more aware of CPD options.</p>
<p>Professional development (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>Institutional funding for professional registration with the Science Council (RSci, RSciTech, CSci) has now been reinstated indefinitely. Initial registrations are slow, but this is in part because our technical colleagues are also awaiting changes in the application process for this important accreditation. We anticipate there will be many more applications in the coming year.</p>

One faculty has posted clear statements regarding their support of a range of careers on their webpages and at the top of their dedicated SharePoint hub. It has also been circulated via emails. In hindsight, it is difficult to evaluate this measure, other than to note that the statements have been posted, but the faculty reports that it helps to facilitate conversations around research staff career development. Data from our biannual surveys also hint at greater confidence that there is support for a wider range of career options.

Academic Managers of Researchers

The CRSD's Challenge & Support Course, designed in collaboration with managers to support them specifically in managing research staff, ran 3 times in 2022-3 and 2023-4. Booking numbers increased with each iteration resulting in more than 60 attendances in year 1 and 80 in year 2. Course participants continue to report a learning gain immediately after the course and 3 months after the course in the first year 100% of respondents reported a direct change to their working practice due to attending the course. We plan to continue running this course in the forthcoming academic year.

Since the original action plan was written, UKRI and other funders have requested that grant applicants include how they will support their staff during their projects. The CRSD have piloted extending the above training to cover this topic, starting with a one faculty and a large meeting. In both instances the reception was sufficiently favourable that we will seek out other opportunities to roll out such training more widely.

Researchers

One faculty piloted an award scheme to recognise contributions of research staff to a wider agenda, e.g. committee contributions and project leadership. The intention is that research staff will be encouraged to broaden their skills and experience by this award. Overall the scheme was considered so successful that other faculties are following the example. We have yet to evaluate if it has had the desired effect on research staff.

	<p>Following on from the success of our suite of 20 case studies of King's Postdocs who have moved on to careers outside of the academic environment we are extending this project to examine hidden careers within HEIs. This project is supported by funds for Research Culture from Research England. Initial steps include obtaining ethical approval with future publication in mind and scoping of potential candidates.</p> <p>King's Careers & Employability's courses addressing academic progression that are targeted to specific groups, e.g. Advancing in Academia for Natural & Mathematical Sciences, What's up Doc for research assistants considering a PhD and a generic online version of Advancing in Academia have all been delivered and received good feedback. They are now in a process of review and updating to ensure they remain relevant and accessible.</p> <p>Mental Health First Aid training has proved sufficiently popular that King's has now established and filled posts to deliver this in house. The first sessions will be rolled out over the next reporting period. The effect of trauma encountered during some research projects is now more widely recognised, prompting pilot projects on support for affected researchers in the forthcoming year.</p> <p>We have reestablished our apprenticeship scheme for technicians. This is expected to provide a large cohort of our established technical colleagues with the opportunity to gain management and organisational skills.</p>
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Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result. (max 500 words)

We continue to see growing enthusiasm from senior management and the faculties to engage with the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat as the Research Culture agenda takes root. This is enabling us to drive through relevant initiatives as they are included in an increasing number of strategic plans.

Most of our projects were new at the beginning of this action plan and many on a larger scale than previous projects. We are confident that the majority of them are making good progress and we anticipate seeing more impact in the next reporting period. Early signs of success are that we are seeing a number of projects being copied from one faculty to the next. We ran our biennial survey last year and identified an increase in the amount of professional development undertaken since the previous survey.

We continue to be enthusiastic about having ceased reporting on what has become business-as-usual and focusing on ambitious projects that we anticipate will result in substantial benefits. We have already noticed this with our courses for the managers of research staff and our approach to B&H.

We anticipate that our project to address the use of FTCs will similarly yield positive results. We have reviewed our processes and found ways in which we can improve those addressing requests for transitions to open contracts following 4 years of continuous employment. While the legal requirement is for those who have had 2 or more FTCs we have agreed to extend this to those on 1 FTC. In carrying out the project we have also uncovered approaches to maintain the connection between contract and cost allocation, thereby making open contracts more feasible for all our research staff. We anticipate making changes to the existing processes later in 2024. Once this is delivered we intend to focus our attention on the length of contracts for research staff supported by external funding.

The implementation of “Report + Support” in its early days appears to be having an impact on the perception of how King’s responds to B&H. While we anticipate that reporting may increase we would like to think that this is because our colleagues are more willing to come forward. Early indications from the King’s Research Staff Survey are that there is an increase in reporting and knowing how to report. We continue to watch the outcomes from this initiative with enthusiasm, including data on the number of cases dealt with, the time it takes to deal with them and the kinds of resolutions reached.

Supporting managers in their ability to serve their research staff is an area that we continue to see needs more attention, as does improving knowledge about the entitlement to professional development time. We will continue to broaden our offering for the managers and understanding of professional development over the final year of the action plan, tapping into the requirement for professional development to be written into grant applications. The CRSD will measure this by the numbers of staff we discuss these issues with and the success of grant applications containing this information.

**Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period
(max 500 words)**

Key objectives around our three priority projects are outlined here. There are other projects not listed here that can be found in our HR Excellence in Research Action Plan, some of which are described above.

Fixed-term contracts

1. Clear policy regarding how we manage transfer to open contracts following 4 years continuous service
2. Increase in transfers from fixed-term to open contracts following 4 years continuous service or reasons why applications are not made or granted
3. Functioning redeployment process that provides continued employment for those whose contracts come to an end. We anticipate that not all staff will want to take advantage of this so will be monitoring those who decline the opportunity as well as those who take it up. Evaluation may include input from those who have been redeployed and their new manager regarding the success of the process and fit of the new role.
4. Initiation of a project to review contract length vs grant length. The initial findings suggest that there are multiple reasons for any discrepancy, some of which are fully valid. We will aim to identify those that can be changed without disruption, e.g. length of time between the grant being awarded and staff being recruited, and make those the focus.
5. Clear communications to help those affected understand how the project is unfolding and what our aims are, monitored by responses to these communications and appreciation of what our aims are.

Bullying and Harassment

1. Continue to monitor the use of “Report + Support”, creating clear data to demonstrate the value of the information within it and the success of resolution of conflict prior to official registration of cases and outcomes of cases that are officially registered.
2. Roll out work on anonymous reporting where trends and multiple reports pinpointing individuals and locations enable action to be taken.
3. Continue “Active Bystander” training, monitoring uptake and feedback from participants to ensure it continues to be of value together with additional advanced courses and similar evaluation.

Training and Resources for Managers

1. Continuation of existing courses and creation of new ones to support good practice in the management of research staff and creation of new courses and resources for those needing to include professional development of their staff into grant applications. Monitoring will be by long term feedback from course participants and research staff employed on such grants, together with success rates of grant applications.

Projects not described in the existing plan

1. Following on from the success of our Career Tracks project we are now focusing on the identification of the career paths taken by those who start as researchers and remain in Higher Education in roles other than becoming an academic. The outcome will be a resource for research staff and their managers to understand the options for those who wish to take alternative paths and the strategies used to do this.
2. There is still a lack of awareness about the entitlement for research staff to 10 days per year to undertake professional development. We are starting a new campaign that addresses this.

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (*max 200 words*)

The report is compiled by the CRSD. Content is provided by faculties and central departments via individual communications, consultation with the CRSD's Oversight Group and the RSRC. It is then submitted to College Research Committee, the body responsible for research and the research environment at King's. This committee is responsible for delivering on the actions outlined in the plan and includes faculty Vice Deans for Research, the Dean for Research Culture and the Vice President (Research & Innovation).

Following approval at this level the report passes to Academic Board for scrutiny. The Academic Board is the body responsible on behalf of the Council for the academic work of the university in teaching and examining and in research. The Board is established under the Charter and Statutes and its responsibilities are defined in the Ordinances.

The report passes from there for final approval by the university's governing board, College Council.

Current timeframes are for College Council to receive the report for discussion at their November meeting, with the reporting period coinciding with that of the HR Excellence in Research Award submission, typically ending in May. Publication of the action plan aligns with the HR Excellence in Research Award renewal, typically November.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries: Kathy Barrett, Associate Director (Research Staff Development)
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This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk
www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk