

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Annual Report, November 2021

Goldsmiths became signatories of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (2019) in 2020. In 2021 we conducted a gap analysis and updated our researcher development action plan in accordance with the Principles of the Concordat and in alignment with our submission for the 8-year HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) award.

During 2019-21 we made progress on establishing a framework for effective researcher support, increased our focus on staff wellbeing through the pandemic and reviewed employment policies, procedures and training provision.

Our successful application for Athena SWAN Bronze in 2020 laid the groundwork for this work, and although the Covid pandemic required us to adapt teaching delivery, staff development activity and wellbeing support for students and staff, researcher support and career development remained a key focus.

Building on our achievements in 2019-20, our strategic priority for 2021-2023 is to enhance support for all researchers at all stages of their careers. Where our 2021 review has shown us that we have the structures, mechanisms and processes in place to support researchers across the institution, our focus now is to raise awareness of development opportunities, better engage with researchers, ensure there are robust mechanisms in place for measuring impact and strengthen our commitment to equality and diversity.

Consultation meetings with academic departments indicated that there is strong support for the Principles of the RD Concordat. The qualitative feedback reflected themes highlighted through previous surveys (e.g. Athena SWAN 2018 survey and 2019-20 staff development surveys), with respondents identifying the need for learning and development to be considered as part of workload allocation, the need for clarity on the budget allocated for career enhancement activities, and the value of mentoring.

This feedback has guided our priorities for 2021-23, including steps to improve the take-up of PDR, monitor of workload allocation and continue to develop targeted researcher development activities, including mentoring.

The consultation highlighted our research community's deep commitment to challenge the institutional barriers affecting researchers from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. We have recently been awarded funding through the UKRI Generation

Delta Project to improve black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds students' access to postgraduate research and this feeds into our ongoing work, in collaboration with students, researchers and other HEI partners, to interrogate and remove barriers within the researcher community and to further progress racial justice.

To support this strategic priority, we will continue to ensure that our promotions and recruitment procedures are equitable and that all staff understand their responsibilities to create a positive researcher environment.

Institutional context

We currently have 501 academic staff on research contracts, 44 of whom are on Research-only (R-only) contracts and 457 on Teaching and Research (T&R) contracts. In 2019/20 65 staff (on R-only or T&R contracts) were listed as Early Career Researchers ([ECRs] defined as within 7-years of completing PhD).

Heads of Academic Departments and Directors of Research have primary responsibility for nurturing a supportive research environment and providing professional development opportunities to support all their researchers. They are supported by the Research and Enterprise team and the Organisational Development and Equalities Team (HR) who work together to ensure College-wide staff development programmes are inclusive and actively engage researchers.

The Research and Enterprise Committee (REC), chaired by the Pro-Warden for Research and Enterprise (who is also the senior management champion of the RD Concordat) has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the RD Concordat/HR EIR Action Plan, in conjunction with the Researcher Development Concordat Working Group (CWG). In June 2021, the CWG's membership was reviewed (members are listed [on our research development webpage.](#)) , and the group was re-convened with the aim of planning a better, more standardised and consistent delivery of support to researchers across the governance structures in the university.

A Researcher Training Officer was appointed in early 2021 to coordinate the CWG and lead on the development of targeted researcher training programmes. In August 2021 we set up an online ECR network to share regular information about training and development; members are invited to input into policies and initiatives likely to impact researchers.

How our evaluation was undertaken

The CWG led the review which included evaluating and updating our 2019-21 HREiR action plan, conducting a researcher development gap analysis and feeding back on proposed activities for 2021-2023 action plan.

Drafts of the proposed activities included in the new action plan were shared at REC and consultation meetings were held with Heads of School (HoS), Heads of Department (HoD) and Directors of Research (DoR) (27 participants) to evaluate progress and agree priorities and the strategic direction for 2021-23. To enhance opportunities for consultations, these meetings will continue to take place on a termly basis to discuss key issues and updates, share examples of good practice, and inform ongoing researcher development activity.

We invited research staff to provide feedback via an online survey, however, the response rate continues to be low (under 5% of the total research population). This has informed our strategic priority to focus on engaging researchers in feedback and evaluation mechanisms for 2021-2023. Our new ECR Network is one way in which we hope to achieve this due to its relative infancy, it did not generate sufficient feedback for this reporting period.

In recognition of this, we asked HoDs and DoRs to consult with their ECR's and share feedback on the draft action plans, and we also asked departments to report on mentoring provision for ECRs. Further information about the research culture at departmental level, including opportunities and priorities for researcher career development, was obtained from REF2021 Environment Statements and was used to inform plans to enhance our training and development programme.

Key achievements and progress since the 6-year review (2019-21)

Our evaluation has highlighted many areas of progress, despite the impact of the pandemic and financial challenges within the institution. However, we are aware that there are areas where more work is required in order to demonstrate impact and outcome, and this will be a key focus of our work in 2021-23.

1. Environment and Culture

The RD Concordat is now included in 100% of new researcher contract packs, induction packs for PIs, and in PhD supervisor training sessions. Research Services have introduced a weekly research funding e-bulletin and an online researcher development hub, which has received over 400 page views since its launch in Sept 2021.

Improved communications have led to greater interest in and take up of researcher training events (see below). HR adapted its wellbeing provision for staff during the pandemic, ensuring support such as counselling, the Staff Assistance Programme, and Mental Health First Aiders could be accessed remotely online or by phone.

39 staff attended Mental Health training in 2019-20 and 45 in 2020-21. 84% of respondents to the 2020 Staff Wellbeing Survey agreed that they found the initiatives beneficial to their personal wellbeing. To help ensure that researchers act in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, Research Services ran two new ethics training sessions in 2021. The sessions were well received and the success of the events has led to the development of a suite of co-hosted training sessions, resources, and awareness raising initiatives planned for 2022.

Supporting the next generation of researchers. In 2021, the Graduate School developed a new package to allow all early researchers who have successfully completed their PhD at Goldsmith, to continue their affiliation for an additional year as Graduate School Fellows. The Scheme will be introduced in January 2022, and aims to retain and sustain a community of talented early career researchers as they develop their research career. We look forward to reporting on impact in our 10-year HR EIR Report.

2. Employment

Focus has been on reviewing recruitment and selection policies, enhancing our approach to PDR (appraisals) and ensuring all new joiners are provided with key policies, resources and training as part of their induction. All Chairs of recruitment panels are required to undertake comprehensive training, so recruitment training was reviewed and re-launched in Summer 2021 (to date, 2 out of 8 participants were academics).

Academic Promotions briefings were reviewed, researchers were directly invited to attend and to date 4 sessions have been delivered to 62 participants in 2021/22. Targeted sessions were offered to women and staff of colour and a further session is planned for practice-based researchers. We created space in these sessions for staff to discuss approaches to Academic Promotions procedures, and will use the feedback to help remove barriers to career progression.

Over 80% of participants reported that the briefings provided them with a clearer understanding of the Academic Promotions procedures. The Graduate School continued to deliver Graduate School Inductions so that PHD students and their supervisors are fully briefed on the range of professional development opportunities open to them (participation increased from 137 in 2019-20 to 178 in 2020-21). Public Engagement undertaken by academic staff and PhD candidates is formally recognised at the Warden's Annual Public Engagement Awards (established in 2016) and expanded in 2020.

Annual Public Engagement Grants provide funding of up to £1000 for up to 10 researcher-led projects. Not only do the funds support activity, but the application, monitoring and reporting processes are designed to engender and embed good practice in the long term.

Sharing best practice. Researchers are supported to develop their approach to Public Engagement and share resources, training and peer support through a network of Public Engagement Representatives. The PE Rep role was agreed in consultation with academic HoDs and hours are allocated into workloads to ensure they have sufficient time to undertake their role.

3. Professional Career Development

The number and range of research support events has significantly increased since 2018/19, and attendance has surpassed our original targets. In 2021/22, 12 events were delivered to 305 attendees, compared to three events were delivered to 24 attendees in 2019/20. A sample of 4 events shows that over half (48/90) attendees were on T&R/R-only contracts. Encouraged by increased levels of engagement and supported by the introduction of a dedicated Research Training Officer, we launched an expanded researcher development programme in 2021/22 with over 20 sessions planned and aligned with the RDF framework.

Attendance of academic staff at HR Learning and Development events also increased from 130 in 2017/18 to 152 in 2020-21 (70% of which were on T&R (99) or R-Only (8) contracts). We also launched a targeted leadership programme for BAME staff and their line managers, 5 of 28 participants were research staff and initial feedback was positive with participants highlighting improved conversations about career progression. For doctoral researchers, the Graduate School introduced a new research student showcase seminar in 2020-21 to celebrate the achievements of recent graduates. Finally, REF2021 Environment Statements showed that 13/15 academic departments offered ECRs/new staff a mentor and 8 departments specifically stated that they reduced teaching and admin load for ECRs to support career development.

Examples of good practice includes Educational Studies, which has an established research mentoring scheme for all academic staff, and Psychology which actively promote PDRs and reported that 90% researchers have had a PDR in recent years.

Strategy for 2021-23

In 2019-21 we focused on establishing a framework and structure for more effective career development support. Our priority for 2021-23 is to embed support across the institution, better engage researchers, and develop robust mechanisms for measuring impact and outcomes. We will continue to seek out the views of researchers through regular (termly) meetings, and grow our ECR Network to ensure that decisions about research training, ethics and integrity, and knowledge exchange is transparent and informed by the views of researchers. The pandemic, coupled with a need to urgently address the College's financial deficit delayed our progress in some areas, and some actions have been carried over into the 2021-23 action plan. Our priorities, and a selection of activities identified in response to our internal review, are listed here:

1. Raise awareness of career development opportunities for researchers [ECI1, ECI2, EI2, EI5, EI6, PCDI1, PCD15]

- Increase participation of academic in Goldsmiths Induction to ensure researchers have a consistent experience and ensure at least 50% of new research staff attend New Staff Induction event.

- Develop an ECR induction programme on research grant management using an institutionally accepted inclusive definition of ECRs and introduce-support package through 2 targeted events.
- Engage new research staff in career development opportunities by developing tailored induction package and monitoring attendance at training events.

2.Improve feedback and consultation mechanisms [EC15, ECI6, E15, PCD16]

- Improve engagement with ECRs by encouraging them to join Early Career Researcher Network and participate in conversations and policy development. By 2023 we aim to have a minimum of 1 ECR (within 7-years of PhD) from each department and a lively discussion forum.
- Publish findings of FTC review develop a clearer understanding of reasons for appointments of staff on FTCs, and the operationalisation and application of the end of a contract. As part of the Goldsmiths Recovery Programme and planned organisational change, we will undertake a review of workload modelling which will include the types of contracts that we have, to ensure staff are employed on the right type of contract and clear guidance on the use of FTC.
- Consult with Researchers, Unions and the wider community to identify the steps that may be taken to meet the Concordat recommendation of 10 professional development days per year.
- Review feedback and consultation mechanisms, develop strategy for ongoing monitoring and reporting, to include running CEDARS survey (2023) and increasing participation.

3.Expand Professional Career Development training and support [EI4, PCDI1, PCDI2, PCDI3, PCDI4, PCDI5]

- Develop and publicise targeted researcher training offer and online resources, including sessions on research funding, research ethics and integrity, research project management, Knowledge Exchange, policy and partnership development.
- Review Leadership training to ensure it addresses the specific responsibilities of Research Managers and Heads of Department to support researchers and develop sessions to help Research Managers signpost researchers to career development opportunities.
- Pilot targeted mentoring programme linking ECRs and Post Docs with mentors from other departments, use feedback to expand the programme and develop a sustainable mentoring model.
- Collect case studies and host training sessions on careers outside of academia, inviting staff and external partners to share insight into their career development outside of academia.

4.Support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through researcher development [ECI3, ECI4, E11, EI3, EI7, PCDI2]

- Working with the Graduate School, the [Generation Delta project](#) will deliver a series of active interventions to improve the experiences and outcomes for BAME female students through 3 phases of the PGR lifecycle: Access to Academy (A2A); Retention and Progression (RaP); and Training for Careers (T4C). We will be reporting back on the outcomes of that programme in subsequent years.
- Continue to roll-out requirement for Chairs of Recruitment Panels to be trained in recruitment and selection to ensure fair and inclusive selection practices. Train all-line managers (300 staff) by 2024 (150 / 50% by 2023). 80% of training participants report a better understanding of how to apply fair and transparent recruitment and selection practices.
- As part of our work towards the Race Equality Charter, RS, GS and OD&E will work together to support the career progression of researchers from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, we will monitor the pipeline from post-graduate study to professor, and engage with researchers to develop evidence-based approach to removing the barriers at each career stage.