

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.

In 2022 we established a post of Dean for Research Culture, appointing Professor Tim Newton to the role, followed by a new Research Culture Department funded by Research England, to be opened on October 2nd 2023. Successful application by the Principal and supported by the Dean of Research Culture and a team of academics and Professional Services Staff for funding from Wellcome, input from our experienced Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team and projects focussing on removing barriers to Black and Minority Ethnic PGR students continuing in an academic career trajectory will enable us to create a more inclusive career structure over the coming years that we anticipate will result in a more diverse research workforce. Faculties are also creating new posts with a remit of focusing on research culture.

King’s has recently opened an Employee Relations Department that seeks to improve processes around retention, redeployment and redundancy. We have also invested in “Report + Support”, a mechanism for managing all aspects of bullying, harassment and victimisation. We have restructured our Organisational Development and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) departments to enhance the provision for EDI and wellbeing and leadership and reinvigorated “Our Principles in Action”, a set of behavioural competencies that support positive interactions between our staff and students.

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.

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 and a Bronze Race Equality Charter Mark.

We routinely carry out surveys of research staff in alternate years and this year completed an all-staff survey that is currently undergoing evaluation. These surveys are enabling us to focus on issues that are of importance and relevance to those involved in research, including those that have an impact on research culture, for example the prevalence of bullying and harassment.

In the last two 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 11th 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 (2023 survey currently in progress) and via the Research Staff Representative Committee (RSRC). This year we had an All Staff Survey and 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 now 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 racialised or other minority backgrounds being piloted in one faculty with a view to rolling it out across the university.

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 is currently opaque. Efforts are being made by one faculty to ensure a consistent approach with a view to rolling out the findings to other faculties when complete.

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 60 attendances in the first 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. 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 are seeking 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>Active Bystander training expanded to include a second more advanced programme following uptake of Part I by more than 1,000 employees.</p> <p>Report and Support launched in October 2022. Staff are using the system (34 named reports to June 2023) and data is becoming available to demonstrate that cases are being taken seriously. Future actions will include monitoring the progress of cases.</p> <p>Employee Relations Team established in May 2022 to support range of issues including, disciplinary, grievances, and non-renewal of FTCs. Encouraging use of informal resolution rather than escalation, in particular with B&H, as a new process at King’s. Impact to be addressed over the next year.</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. Impact to be addressed over the next year.</p> <p>One faculty has been carrying out qualitative research with their staff on their perception of research culture in their faculty and are currently developing 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”. Future consultation with departments and relevant committees will demonstrate how valuable this approach has been.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>One faculty has initiated a “Catalyst Project” aimed at improving the research environment. This includes an event</p>

to highlight career opportunities, taking place in the summer of 2023, and work on improving induction processes, to take place later in 2023.

Within one faculty the assigned Task & Finish Group recommended the establishment of Confidential Advisor posts, to be rolled out in May 2023. Impact to be addressed over the next year. This is following on from the success of similar posts in a separate faculty.

One faculty is working on an EDI action plan with a specific strategic group to address workload, flexible working and long working hours. This work has been delayed beyond the planned deadline, but is still ongoing.

One faculty has set up an EDI hub that includes details of all training and awareness courses available online. They have made their staff aware and will be addressing the impact in the next year.

One faculty will be hosting a mindfulness, wellbeing and time management event with inclusivity at its heart. This will include speed talks by colleagues at all levels and backgrounds to encourage inclusivity. The event will be evaluated in the next reporting period.

Researchers

Two faculties are creating dedicated Sharepoint hubs to be a central portal for all relevant information their Research Staff need. This is a work in progress, having been given a good foundation with a sister hub for PGR students. Impact to be measured in the next reporting period. One other faculty has chosen to organise events to raise awareness of available resources, the first one having been successful according to feedback gathered that has informed the planning for the next year.

Mental Health First Aid Training has been rolled out to more than 50 staff, supported by various faculties and central services, and received positive feedback. Impact to be addressed over the next year.

Diversity THRIVE, a training programme for researchers from racialised or other minority backgrounds, is under

	<p>development in one faculty. Initial consultation event was positively received and provided material for the programme content. The programme will be rolled out in the pilot faculty over the next year, followed by evaluation.</p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>We have carried out an extensive review of the use of FTCs at our own and other universities. Typically, open contracts offered to those whose salary depends on external funds come with a caveat that the person is at risk of redundancy when the funding expires. When open contracts have been offered under these circumstances, research staff have viewed them as disingenuous. Consequently we have now moved to a new approach of ensuring that our processes around the use of FTCs are transparent, equitable and applied fairly.</p> <p>The new Employee Relations Team 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 will be 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 available from later in 2023. One faculty has been piloting a researcher-supervisor agreement signed during induction. Awareness of this document was low. Future plans include awareness raising at a research staff away day.</p> <p>Other faculties have been updating or enhancing their induction programme to include in one case, ethics and mentoring, and will be implementing evaluation next year.</p> <p>The use of mentoring and buddying is gaining ground at King's. Faculties are setting up mentoring schemes for new employees to help them settle in. One has completed a mapping process to identify current mentoring provision and will put their programme in place in the next year. A second has included setting it up as an item on induction lists, with evaluation for next year.</p>

	<p>One faculty has created an App for use in monitoring uptake of PDRs. This is now being used for all staff in the faculty and has provided accurate data, e.g. % take up, enabling the faculty to target areas where improvements are required.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers While there are pockets of use of the Managers Toolkit, take up is slow. We will evaluate how those who already use it have found it and create more resources to interpret its use.</p> <p>Researchers Promotion processes for academic and research staff vary. One faculty raised the issue of including research staff in the academic performance framework. Local processes are now merged to create a consistent faculty policy. Evaluation will take place later in 2023.</p> <p>In early 2023 we initiated the Mentoring and Support Awards for those who have provided substantial input to the research of PGR students. The awards will run annually, with the first round completed in June 2023, after the reporting period for this review.</p> <p>Research staff continue to have mixed levels of awareness of their right to 10 days per year to devote to professional development. However, since the last survey 2 years ago there has been an increase from 6 to 8 out of 10 considering that they spend at least 1 day a month on professional development. For one faculty, appointing a Learning & Development Champion was expected to address this issue. There has been a delay in the appointment so the faculty have focused on improving their use of the online registration system.</p> <p>One faculty has set up funding for professional development beyond the internal programme. In the last year, 30% of all awards were made to research staff and a new category of awards created in which one has been ringfenced specifically for research staff.</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution Institutional funding for professional registration with the Science Council (RSci, RSciTech, CSci) has proved to be elusive during this reporting period. This has resulted in a reduction in technical colleagues applying for this important</p>

accreditation. New potential sources have been identified and these will be pursued over the next reporting period.

One faculty has posted clear statements regarding their support of a range of careers on their webpages. In hindsight, it is difficult to evaluate this measure, other than to note that the statements have been posted. It potentially contributes to a greater confidence in research staff considering a broader careers choice so we will look at this in our next biennial careers survey, due in October 2023.

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. Booking numbers increased with each iteration resulting in more than 60 attendances. Course participants reported a learning gain immediately after the course and 3 months after the course 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 plan to extend the above training to cover this topic, starting with a pilot in one faculty.

We are also in the process of developing a hub for research staff managers supporting them in having career conversations with research staff and how to refer them to other services such as King's Careers & Employability. Initial scoping exercises were to be completed by July 2023 with implementation in two stages, one each in the following two years. Those managing this project have now left King's so we will be seeking replacements.

Researchers

One faculty has set up an award scheme to recognise contributions of research staff to a wider agenda, e.g. committee contributions and project leadership. This award scheme is now up and running with the first awards to be made in the next reporting period. The intention is that

	<p>research staff will be encouraged to broaden their skills and experience by this award. Evaluation will be carried out in the next reporting period.</p> <p>We have compiled a suite of 20 case studies of King’s Postdocs who have moved on to careers outside of the academic environment to encourage our current researchers to view other career options positively. These case studies and an accompanying report describing what we know about postdoc career trajectories outside of academia was launched in autumn 2022 under the name “Career Tracks” and within the reporting period has been widely viewed.</p> <p>King’s Careers & Employability have developed a suite of new courses around academic progression that are targeted to specific groups, e.g. Advancing in Academia for Natural & Mathematical Sciences, to be delivered during the next reporting period, What’s up Doc for research assistants considering a PhD, run in March 2023 with 18 attendees providing positive feedback, and a generic online version of Advancing in Academia, to be launched in summer 2023.</p> <p>We have also collaborated with the Science Museum in offering volunteer roles for our technical staff to enable them to learn about presenting to the public and boosting the profile of the technical profession. This proved popular with some of our technicians, who were given excellent feedback by the museum.</p>
<p>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. (<i>max 500 words</i>)</p>	
<p>As the Research Culture agenda takes root we are seeing more enthusiasm from senior management and the faculties to engage with the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat. This is enabling us to drive through relevant initiatives as they are included in an increasing number of strategic plans.</p> <p>Most of our projects were new last year and many on a larger scale than previous projects. Full evaluation will necessarily be longer term. We are also running our biennial survey after the reporting period and while the data is not yet available, we will be able to use this in future evaluations. We are confident that the majority of projects contained in our 2022-2025 action plan are making good progress and we anticipate seeing more impact in the next reporting period.</p>	

We are very happy with the new approach we have taken, to cease reporting on what has become business-as-usual and focus on projects that we anticipate will be difficult but that will result in substantial benefits for research staff. We have already noticed this with our courses for the managers of research staff. We anticipate that our project to address the use of FTCs will similarly yield positive results.

Reviewing the use of FTCs resulted in surprising findings, in that while we originally felt that moving to open contracts was the appropriate action we are now of the opinion that this is disingenuous as it will make no difference to our research staff. Consequently we have changed the project to ensuring that the existing processes are transparent and fair and that we are able to redeploy staff facing redundancy wherever possible. This will be carried out over the next two years, the aims being:

1. Clear uptake of open contracts following 4 years of service or valid business reasons not to do so.
2. Contract length to be the maximum possible, measured by an increase in average contract length or valid business reasons for no change.

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. This is aided by the establishment of a dedicated and experienced team to address these issues. While we anticipate that reporting may increase we would like to think that this is because our colleagues are more willing to come forward. We will be watching 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 can see needs more attention. We will move towards broadening our offering for this group of colleagues over the next two years, 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
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. Review of contract length vs grant length completed with recommendations for further action. 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 on FTCs 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. Continue “Active Bystander” training, monitoring uptake and feedback from participants to ensure it continues to be of value.
3. Evaluate the experience of B&H via All Staff survey and surveys of research staff and their managers, either across the university or locally, making comparisons to data from previous years.

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.

2. Continuation of the construction of a careers hub for managers to support them in having productive career conversations with their staff and how to refer them to other resources.

New Project

Following on from the success of our Career Tracks project we will now focus on 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.

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:



Lord Geidt
Chair of King's College Council

[approved by Council on 21 November 2023]

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