

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

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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*)

Imperial is committed to research excellence, supported by integrity, good governance and best practice that encourages bold, globally-focused research. Our research culture is grounded in values that prioritise equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) through our EDI Strategy for inclusive excellence, research integrity, and researcher wellbeing.

Achieving a positive research culture is the responsibility of all staff and students at Imperial and is monitored through our staff surveys and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. Imperial's commitment is demonstrated through the policies, practices and initiatives that are managed across the University.

Our Values are central to our proactive policy of championing equality, diversity, and social responsibility. They embody our commitment to inclusiveness, participation and openness and are put in practice every day to create the best working environment and culture.

To embed a positive research culture, we provide staff with a Research Environment Toolkit for implementing changes in grant applications and their research environments. Imperial also provides tools and support to line managers and research supervisors to establish a positive research culture.

Funding from Research England supports projects to explore and enhance our research culture. Since 2021-22, over £4m has been secured from Research England's Enhancing Research Culture funding to develop our research culture, aligned with the government's 2021 R&D People and Culture Strategy.

Key Areas of Research Culture at Imperial:

Research integrity

Research integrity underpins Imperial's achievements. All staff and students are expected to promote and maintain a culture of honesty, openness and responsibility, enabling research to be conducted with integrity. Imperial is a signatory of the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity and has adopted the Universal Ethical Code for Scientists. Guidance and training are available in areas such as Research Integrity,

Data management, Open Research and Societal Engagement for doctoral students and all staff.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Imperial is committed to promoting and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion throughout Imperial. We are an Athena SWAN Silver Award winner, a Bronze Award recipient of the Race Equality Charter, a Stonewall Diversity Champion, a Disability Confident Leader and work in partnership with GIRES to promote respect for trans people. The 2024-26 EDI Strategy aims to position EDI at the centre of everything that Imperial does and outlines our priorities and the practical steps that we will take to support individuals, and reform structures and practices that maintain inequality and discrimination.

Researcher Wellbeing

Imperial is committed to building a supportive, inclusive, and highly motivated community across all disciplines, functions and activities to help attract and retain the talented and diverse staff and students to achieve its mission. This requires a supportive and considerate community based on diversity, mutual respect and a commitment to excellence.

The new Imperial “Science for Humanity Strategy” highlights the importance of enabling talent development, amplifying impact of the research we conduct, and powering research through staff recognition, research evaluation, health and wellbeing (with a new Mental health and wellbeing strategy), HR support and professional development (by establishing the Early Career Researcher Institute and Imperial Talent).

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*)

Imperial's new strategy, "Science for Humanity" focuses on three key objectives: Enabling Talent, Powering Research, and Amplifying Impact. This strategy has started to be implemented in 2024 and has as base the Enabling Roadmap.

Our University Talent Strategy (TS) seeks to enable the strategic aims set out in the Imperial Strategy 'Science for Humanity', by reimagining how we: develop our people, cultivate leaders of the future, enable performance, and spot potential within our staff communities. The role and experience of our research staff are critical to us realising our strategic aims.

The Talent Strategy will provide an institutional framework within which to support the Concordat outcomes of creating healthy and supportive research environments where researchers are recognised and valued for their contributions in research and beyond, supported in their professional and career development, and are equipped and empowered to succeed in their chosen careers.

Below are some highlights that particularly direct and align to these aims and the three Concordat pillars:

Environment and Culture

Imperial is committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters collaboration and innovation.

- **Values:** Embedding values that prioritize equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) throughout the institution, creating an environment where all members feel valued and respected.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Building and maintaining an inclusive, compassionate community that supports physical and mental health and wellbeing. This includes providing support and advice to students and staff when needed and promoting a culture of care.
- **Cross-Institutional Schools of Convergence Science:** Establishing schools focused on climate, energy, sustainability, human and artificial intelligence, health, medtech, robotics, and space to address societal challenges through interdisciplinary research.
- **Global Collaboration:** Enhancing international partnerships and collaborations to tackle global challenges, with hubs in strategic locations like Singapore, the USA, Ghana and India.

Employment

Imperial's strategy focuses on attracting, nurturing, and championing talent to make a meaningful difference.

- **Leadership Development:** Focussed development of global and institutional Leadership skills throughout different levels across the institution to strengthen the efficacy of people leading work through others, be that internal to Imperial or in an external or wider leadership capacity.
- **EDI Strategy 2024-26 and Inclusive Excellence:** The strategy outlines specific actions to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in recruitment, retention, and career progression, ensuring that all staff have equal opportunities to succeed.
- **Support for Staff, Supervisors and Managers:** Refocused development of People Managers; equipping both new and existing people managers with the skills and core institutional and context specific information, policies and practices to support them to respond to issues in their roles and to create positive working environments for their teams, drawing on learning and principles from our Mental Health, Wellbeing and EDI strategies.

Professional Development of Researchers

Imperial is dedicated to empowering researchers through continuous professional development.

- **Imperial Talent and Early Career Researcher Institute:** Actively promote and ensure collaboration between different teams, i.e.. ECRI & HR, to co-design a relevant, engaging and impactful development offer that advances the perception and experience of research staff exploring different sectors to progress their careers.
- **Supporting Annual Review Conversations (ARC):** Continue to build on engagement and practice of ARC appraisal process and improve the connectivity and alignment with recognition and promotion processes to focus on recognising researcher contributions. Highlight the value and impact of adapting and responding to individual circumstances and needs in relation to mental health and wellbeing and career development to support people to feel motivated to perform at their best and develop in their careers at Imperial and beyond.

These objectives reflect Imperial's commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive research culture, supporting employment practices that champion diversity, and providing robust professional development opportunities for researchers.

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]

Environment and Culture (max 600 words)	<p>Institution</p> <p>The new Strategy, launched in 2024, aims to maximize Imperial's global impact. The "Science for Humanity" strategy leverages Imperial's strengths in science, engineering, medicine, and business, focusing on innovation, global partnerships, and addressing major challenges like climate change and health. The Enabling roadmap supports this through leadership development, advanced skills training, and promoting a collaborative, inclusive culture.</p> <p>The new EDI Strategy 2024-26, led by the Associate Provosts for EDI has seven pillars: staff training and monitoring, inclusive recruitment, staff research and teaching culture, student experience, community and culture, community cohesion, support and celebration, and visibility beyond Imperial. This year, Imperial also reviewed its Race Equality Charter (REC) Bronze Award action plan, aiming for the Silver Award in November 2026.</p> <p>The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy implementation plan from August 2024 includes three streams: Culture of Learning and Development, Governance and Measurement, and a People process cluster (Induction). The Ele platform for mental health and wellbeing was launched in August as part of the College's Employee Advisory Program, Confidential Care.</p> <p>Funded by Research England the "Beyond Open Research" project published their final report. Key recommendations include promoting use of data management plans among all</p>
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	<p>researchers, not just principal investigators, expanding public involvement in healthcare data tool development, fostering collaborative policy development on data transparency, and creating a standard for data peer review. Engaging Imperial teams to align responsible practices with recognition, particularly in academic promotions, and ensuring sufficient resources for Research Software Engineers (RSCs) were also highlighted.</p> <p>The project “Tangible Actions to address bullying and harassment of Early Career Researchers” is concluding with the creation of a webpage and resources to deliver tailored messaging about creating a healthy research culture and improving awareness and visibility of existing support and resources.</p> <p>Academic managers of researchers</p> <p>The <u>Academic’s Success Guide</u> engaged 5700 users during 2024, with 16% being new users. The most visited pages were advice on <u>induction and probation</u>, followed by <u>creating a thriving and inclusive environment</u>.</p> <p>The reverse mentoring programme for senior leadership, launched in 2021, continues with 12 new mentoring pairs in the 2024 cohort. Of these mentees, five are in the academic job family and four are research staff, and 2 mentors are in the academic job family while one is research staff.</p> <p>Imperial is now running Values Masterclasses targeted at the Imperial senior leadership teams (HoDs and above) with 14 academics enrolled in 2024.</p> <p>The Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre (PFDC) commissioned a project to review the roles and work of the <u>Postdoc and Fellows Academic Champions</u>, concluded in November. The action plan from these recommendations will be implemented in 2025.</p> <p>New EDI training for <u>managers and supervisors</u> was introduced in 2024, covering topics like mental health and</p>
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	<p>wellbeing, disability adjustments, harassment management and Neurodiversity. A new online self-paced course 'Supporting research degree students from diverse backgrounds' was launched in October. Imperial is also a Practitioner Partner of the <u>Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP)</u>.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>The Concordat awareness pulse survey for researchers, launched in November 2024, runs every four months. Although awareness of the concordat was below 40%, over 85% of respondents are aware of their 10 Development Days. This survey will continue to monitor concordat awareness and dissemination efforts (concluding action 1.2).</p> <p>In July 2024, the PFDC organized a second research staff networking retreat with 23 participants, one from each department. Researchers provided feedback on Concordat actions and suggested new actions for the 2025-2027 plan.</p> <p>The <u>PFDC Reps Network</u> continues to work with the PFDC (and from October 2024 ECRI) to create a positive research environment at Imperial. This year, the network has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • given feedback on the creation of the Early Career Researcher Institute. • contributed to a project on Masters' Supervision by Research Staff. • participated in the project reviewing the roles of the Postdoc and Fellows Champions. <p><u>Imperial as One</u>, the racial equity staff and postgraduate researchers' network, organized the Beyond Ethnicity Career Conference (BECC) for early career professionals in STEMB from BAME backgrounds or other minoritized groups. This year's theme was '<u>AI: Friend or Foe?</u>', focusing on how emerging tech impacts careers/career development, AI and creativity, AI fairness and bias, and the environmental impacts of AI tools. The sessions reached 92 global attendees.</p>
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	<p>In October 2024, Imperial launched the Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI), resulting from the fusion of the former PFDC and the Graduate School. ECRI aims to foster a collaborative research environment addressing 21st-century challenges, supporting early career researchers with learning opportunities, resources, and facilities.</p>
<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>The <u>Working Group to review the Learning and Teaching and Research Terms and Conditions and the use of Fixed Term Contracts</u> has now entered <u>Phase III</u> looking at reviewing of Technology Specialists supporting Research & Education, the group has had their first meeting and will carry on working in 2025.</p> <p>The <u>new inclusive recruitment webpages</u> had an increase in engagement rate of 80%. EDIC ran the inclusive recruitment workshop for 29 new attendees. This concludes action 3.4 of the 23-25 action plan</p> <p>Academic managers of researchers</p> <p>Two new resources were created and added to the Academic Success Guide, this concludes actions 2.8, 2.9 and 2.11 of the 23-25 Concordat action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new resource to support career conversations (<u>Change project</u>). • New resources for <u>reflective practice</u> in inclusive recruitment and inclusive and diverse teams. <p>The <u>Review of Academic Titles and Progression Working Group</u> (established in May 2023) has evaluated the new nomenclature for the academic job family at Imperial with most discussion around the role of Senior lecturer and where it would align with in the new nomenclature. After consultation with the Senior Lecturers themselves, there is now consultation with UCU and work will be resumed in 2025.</p> <p>POD continues to deliver leadership development to Senior Academics with 2 programmes: Leading the Way - <u>Senior</u></p>

	<p><u>Leadership Development in the Age of Disruption and HoDs Onboarding Leadership programme</u> where seven academics enrolled.</p> <p>The Group Coaching sessions, funded by Research England and delivered by external coaches, were not repeated due to low interest and logistical challenges. Feedback was generally positive, but participants preferred 1:1 coaching for confidentiality. However, there was a new outcome: the <u>Peer Mentoring programme</u>, developed from Fellows Leadership Network feedback, combines leadership development and coaching. Initially unadvertised to new lecturers, it is now officially for fellows and new lecturers, structured around the Narrative CV. This concludes action 2.13 from 23-25 action plan.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>A mentoring Scheme for Fellows at <u>Imperial I-X</u> was piloted in 2024. It aimed to connect I-X Faculty with new Schmidt Postdoctoral Fellows to foster collaboration and mentorship. The scheme allowed fellows to be guided informally by more experienced staff, potentially leading to new research collaborations. Buddy pairs decided their meeting frequency and content (research advice, training resources, and career guidance). High-level feedback from the Buddy Scheme indicates varied experiences among participants. Some have had productive initial meetings, leading to plans for future collaboration and regular interactions. Others found the discussions useful for career and technical advice, with potential for ongoing mentorship. A few participants did not meet due to scheduling conflicts or personal commitments. Overall, the scheme has facilitated valuable connections, though logistical challenges and individual preferences for meeting formats have influenced engagement levels.</p> <p>The second <u>PFDC Awards and Celebration</u> took place in July 2024 (Action 2.3a). A new award (not monetary) was introduced to recognise the contributions of the Postdoc and Fellows Champions to their own departmental research culture. In total 47 nominations were received which equated</p>
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	<p>to 13 individuals being put forward for an award. The event was well attended with over 50 people present.</p>
Professional development (max 600 words)	<p>Institution</p> <p>In 2023 the new <u>Annual Review Conversations (ARC)</u> process was implemented, and it was designed to co-evolve with input from the community to ensure that it remains a living process. After one year of running with high completion rates, the POD team led a series of focus groups to review the process. In the upcoming year, two main points of actions will be taken: streamlining the form used to guide the conversation and providing more training for managers to support them in having meaningful conversations with their reports.</p> <p>In 2024, 1047 research staff had their ARC review – this represents 48% of the total research staff.</p> <p>Academic managers of researchers</p> <p>People and Organisational development launched two accredited programmes <u>Leader as Coach & Manager as Coach Accreditation Programmes</u> during 2024 with 24 number of attendees, of which 12 were academics.</p> <p>PFDC/ECRI continues to build upon the resources available for managers of researchers via the <u>Academic Success Guide</u> with pages added around guidance for managers to support their researchers using their 10 development days, having meaningful career conversation and supporting reflective practice when hiring and building a diverse and inclusive group.</p> <p>PFDC/ECRI continues to provide Leadership Coaching to Independent research fellows and newly appointed Lecturers with 28 new coaches in 2024. Feedback is that 94% say they have gained confidence and insights and have implemented plans for improvements. This provision will continue, and this concludes action 5.7 of 23-25 action plan.</p> <p>Researchers</p>

	<p>In 2024, PFDC refurbished their website which resulted in improved website traffic (almost 400% increase in users, including 21% new users). The most visited webpages were <u>Fellowship opportunities</u> and <u>Courses and Workshops</u>. The website and communications for postdocs and fellows' provision will be reviewed again in 2025 with the establishment of ECRI. This concludes action 1.1 of the 23-25 action plan</p> <p>Engagement with the new <u>10 development days resources</u> has increased with 636 total clicks and 6% new users. This is also reflected in the number of views of the President's video (112 views in one year).</p> <p>PFDC/ECRI delivered an extensive programme of professional skills and career development training, support, and opportunities for >2000 researchers during 2024. Sixty-one courses and workshops, with 1150 participants and >85% satisfaction rate. During 2024, PFDC provided individual support to approximately 500 individuals via one-to-ones and mock interviews and >97% satisfaction rate.</p> <p>PFDC/ECRI have continued to add to the opportunities for researchers to investigate their career choices. This concludes action 5.1 and 5.6 of the 23-25 concordat action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Beyond Academia</u>, has been implemented as part of ECRI provision and one cohort was run in 2024 with 20 participants. • Consultancy – 38 Research staff was lead on consultancy projects, with a total of 49 projects led by research staff (from a total of 498 projects). • <u>Tip sheet resources</u> access has increased to 640 users/yearly with 3% new users in 2024. <p>Building on previous years successes, PFDC/ECRI continued to support three funding schemes during 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Dame Julia Higgins postdoc collaborative fund</u> aims to give researchers the opportunity to develop and deliver a collaborative research project. In total, 27 applications
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	<p>were submitted, which resulted in £41,899 being shared between 14 projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Seeds for Success</u> provides funding to work on preliminary data for a fellowship application. Six projects were awarded, totalling £25,127. • <u>Wings for Ideas</u> allow researchers to work on research that might lead to a new venture, a product, or a prototype. Two projects were awarded, totalling £5000.
<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. (max 500 words)</p>	
	<p>Change at Imperial</p> <p>Imperial launched its new strategy in 2024, leading to significant changes across the university. Key initiatives under the new strategy influencing the current and future action plans include the creation of the Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI), the Imperial Talent, Imperial Futures and Imperial Global pillars of the strategy, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy implementation, the new EDI Strategy (including the Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan action plans), and the review of both the <u>Concordat Implementation and Planning Group</u> and the <u>Researcher Development Committee</u> (RDC) terms of reference. In 2025, reporting committees under the University Research and Enterprise Board, including the RDC, will be reviewed to ensure effective implementation of the new strategy.</p> <p>Due to the creation of ECRI, some concordat actions were put on hold and will be reformulated for the 2025-27 action plan. Communication points under actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, and 1.5 are being reviewed to align with the new Institute's communications for the 2025-27 action plan.</p> <p>With the implementation of The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, we will align specific wellbeing concordat actions with the pillars of Culture of Learning and Development and People processes focusing on induction, buddy and mentoring schemes, and networking actions (actions 2.5, 2.7, 2.10, 3.3).</p> <p>Staff survey analysis revealed dissatisfaction with reward and recognition. Actions 2.2, 2.3, and 2.12 will be reviewed by POD and HR colleagues and embedded in upcoming action plans, including cross-college staff survey actions. New EDI</p>

resources developed by PFDC/ECRI, in collaboration with EDI colleagues, will be implemented across ECRI and POD (actions 2.8 and 2.9).

ECRI and POD are reviewing leadership provision for line managers of researchers, with more resources for induction and re-induction to be included in the new action plan. Managers will receive more support for career development conversations, 10 development days, and the ARC process, with engagement monitored. A new ERP system will be tested in 2025, and ECRI's use of Inkpath will support tracking of the 10 development days (action 4.3).

With ECRI's establishment and the new Imperial Talent pillar, actions around alumni (5.1b, 5.2) and long-term researchers (5.3, 5.4) will be reviewed and added to the new action plan.

Research England Research Culture Funding

Additional funding outside the PFDC core budget has supported many projects in the 2023-25 Concordat Action plan.

The results of the MSc supervision project running during 2024 will be known in early 2025, leading to clearer support for research staff supervising Master students.

During 2025, ECRI will pilot a new interdisciplinary funding workshop with the opportunity for PGRs, Research Staff and Academics to provide feedback on applications from fellowships to collaborative grants.

A project reviewing ECRI's provision and support for neurodiverse ECRs was also funded, looking at supporting ECRs with disabilities and contributing to the creation of more neuroinclusive research working environment.

All projects at Imperial funded by Research England contribute to a safer, better and more inclusive research environment.

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

The key objectives for 2025 are divided into those which are Imperial-wide and those that relate specifically to the new 2025-27 Concordat Action plan.

University-wide objectives

The 2024 staff survey showed decreased happiness with Imperial's leadership and change communications.

Imperial will enhance leadership visibility and transparency, ensuring staff understand the University's mission. The "In Conversation" series with the President and Provost will be expanded – monthly/termly sessions under specific topics and open Q&A will facilitate communication from senior leadership with all staff.

Efforts will keep staff informed about changes and involve them in decisions. A deep dive into change management results has been completed, and a Change Strategy is being developed, with focus groups planned for October. Leadership and management programs will be updated to improve change leadership and staff involvement.

Results from the 2024 Staff survey also showed decreased employee happiness with wellbeing, workload, and reward & recognition.

The new University Talent strategy will enable support for current staff in terms of support and workload management. Employee wellbeing will be prioritized with accessible support. A refreshed Workload group will address issues, and local action plan owners will promote wellbeing support.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy's staff-side projects will be implemented with help from Internal Communications.

Efforts will improve communication about staff benefits and regularly recognize hard work. A benefits pulse survey started November 2024, and monthly pension sessions will expand to include other benefits. Multi-campus benefits fairs are planned for 2025. Recognition and appreciation will be integrated into management development, with a project to improve formal recognition schemes starting once resources are available.

2025-27 Concordat action plan objectives by concordat pillar

The new Concordat action plan will have actions under each of the concordat pillars (1) Research Environment and Culture, 2) Employment, 3) Professional and career development) and actions will cover 5 main areas:

Concordat Awareness and Engagement

Actions will cover raising awareness of the Concordat and ensuring researchers and their line managers understand their roles and how they are supported by the Concordat.

Supporting Talent and community building

Actions will cover support for peer-led networks and enhanced structures for networking and collaboration among research staff. We will develop new training sessions for interdisciplinary research and ensuring awareness of the 10 development days. Actions will cover support for career progression

including research promotions, fellowship support, and increasing awareness of career moves between sectors.

Researcher visibility, recognition and representation

Actions will enhance visibility, recognition, and representation of research staff at all levels within Imperial.

Researcher Induction and Contract Management

Actions will improve induction processes for new research staff and improve end-of-contract information, including information about open-ended contracts.

Supporting PIs and team development

Actions will support managers in having meaningful career development conversations with their research staff and track their engagement with current and new development activities. Additionally, actions were designed to increase awareness among line managers about open-ended contracts and good contractual practices.

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 University Research and Enterprise Board (UREB) promotes Imperial's research profile and the development of a vibrant and inclusive research culture. The Concordat action plan is maintained and monitored by the Researcher Development Committee (RDC), which reports to UREB. The RDC brings together key stakeholders from support services and research. Its aim is to build a supportive, inclusive and highly motivated research community, with a specific focus on the career development of researchers, regardless of career stage or destination.

Progress against the 2023-25 Concordat action plan is monitored by the RDC. Both the PFDC Reps Network, a thriving community of over 70 reps who represent research staff from every department and campus and the Concordat Implementation and Planning Group (CIPG), which is composed of researchers and key service providers and reports to the RDC, are regularly consulted and have contributed to the delivery of the projects set out in the action plan and highlighted above.

This annual report was agreed upon by the CIPG in January 2025, presented to and approved by the RDC in January 2025, UREB in February 2025, University Management Board in March 2025 and ratified by Council, the governing body of the University, in May 2025.

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Mr Manvinder Banga (Council Chair)

Contact for queries: Dr Ines Perpetuo (Concordat Lead), Consultant, Early Career Researcher Institute.

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.

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk