

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

Name of Institution	Imperial College London
Reporting period	February 2022 – February 2023
Date approved by governing body	12 May 2023
Date published online	21 Jun 2023
Web address of annual report	<a href="https://www.imperial.ac.uk/postdoc-fellows-development-centre/about/concordat/">https://www.imperial.ac.uk/postdoc-fellows-development-centre/about/concordat/</a>
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	<a href="https://www.imperial.ac.uk/postdoc-fellows-development-centre/about/concordat/">https://www.imperial.ac.uk/postdoc-fellows-development-centre/about/concordat/</a>
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Karen Hinxman, <a href="mailto:k.hinxman@imperial.ac.uk">k.hinxman@imperial.ac.uk</a>
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via <a href="mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk">CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk</a>	18 July 2023

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 supports and nurtures a research environment that is defined by a culture of integrity, good governance and best practice. Our highly ambitious, collaborative, multidisciplinary community of researchers possess a common goal of tackling the biggest scientific challenges of our time. This is only possible through our outstanding collective research ethos, the College Values that underpin and reflect our behaviours, and by placing public trust and confidence in our research at the heart of everything we do. We have built an environment where researchers can be bold, challenge the boundaries of their fields, and feel supported in judicious risk-taking. Imperial is committed to embedding a positive research culture throughout the College to support our mission to achieve enduring excellence in research and education in science, engineering, medicine and business for the benefit of society.

Achieving a positive research culture is the responsibility of all staff and students at the College. We greatly value our talented researchers and recognise that they are fundamental to our ability to develop and deliver world-class research. Imperial is dedicated to building a supportive, considerate and highly motivated community based on diversity, inclusivity and mutual respect across all disciplines to help us to attract and retain our talented staff and students. Equality of opportunity is essential to achieving research excellence and we believe our diversity of thought and culture is fundamental to our ability to solve complex challenges. We aim to remove barriers, eliminate discrimination and make sure everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Imperial's commitment to excellence underpins everything we do, but this is only possible through our approach to ensuring a positive and inclusive research culture is fully embedded in policies, practices and initiatives across the entire College.

At Imperial, research culture covers:

### **Research integrity**

Research integrity is at the heart of Imperial's Academic Strategy. All staff and students should promote and maintain a culture of honesty, openness and responsibility, enabling research to be conducted with integrity. The College is a signatory of the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity and has adopted the Universal Ethical Code for Scientists. The College offers a wide range of eLearning in this area.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

Imperial is committed to promoting and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the College. There are a number of committees and working groups that

are focused on different activities and aspects of EDI as highlighted in [Imperial's EDI Strategy](#).

### **Researcher Wellbeing**

Imperial is committed to building a supportive, inclusive and highly motivated community to help us attract and retain the talented and diverse staff and students we need to achieve our mission. To support this commitment, Imperial has created a ['Wellbeing at Work' webpage](#) and will launch the 'Institutional Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy' and the 'Future Of...' Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2022-2027' during 2023.

**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)**

### **Environment and culture**

Imperial recognises that to achieve research excellence, there must be a supportive and inclusive research environment. Our research environment is based on a broad set of values underpinning our commitment to research excellence, which encompass a prioritisation of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) through our [EDI Strategy](#), as well as upholding research integrity as outlined in our commitment to the [UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#).

Our set of [College Values](#) play a key role in the College's proactive policy of championing equality, diversity and fulfilling our social responsibilities. These are reinforced by our [Imperial Together](#) initiative, which strengthens the continued efforts to create the best working environment and culture.

Good mental health and wellbeing are at the centre of the research environment that we want to create. Imperial recognises the impact Covid-19 has had on its staff, particularly researchers, and is implementing an institutional mental health and wellbeing strategy, which will be shared with the community during 2023.

Imperial strives to ensure that all the policies, practices and initiatives that are managed across the College are inclusive, equitable and transparent. In 2021, reporting and monitoring infrastructure was introduced for [Imperial Essentials](#) to ensure that everyone is equipped with the knowledge and resources which are

essential to all Imperial staff. These consist of six courses, including information on EDI. There is a 70% completion rate amongst all staff for all six courses.

Acts of bullying, harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct are not acceptable at Imperial. The College uses the Report and Support tool for individuals to disclose unwelcoming behaviours. Over a six-month period in 2022, there were 66 staff disclosures, 54 of which were anonymous. The tool gives cross-College transparency and allows the College to focus attention to stamp out poor behaviour. As report and support is used at a number of institutes, there are discussions underway as to how it could be used to benchmark across the sector.

### **Employment**

The College's People Strategy 2022+ was launched in December 2022. Its overall objective is to support the College in delivering its academic mission by finding and developing diverse talent, creating an inclusive culture, and building a resilient workplace. Guidance is in place to assist with recruitment to ensure that the best person for the role is recruited in line with legislation, best practice principles and the promotion routes available.

A working group was established in 2021 to review the use of fixed-term contracts and the terms and conditions for research and learning and teaching. This includes an evaluation of promotion pathways for researchers. Initial findings are to be shared with the University Management Board in early 2023.

Imperial Insights is a well-established induction process that is open to all staff. The Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre complements Imperial Insights with a welcome package that is tailored to research staff.

Annual appraisals were externally reviewed during 2022. Following extensive consultation with all staff, recommendations will be implemented during 2023.

### **Professional development of researchers**

The Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre (PFDC) has been providing support for research staff at Imperial since 2009. The PFDC offers an extensive programme of professional skills and career development training, support, and opportunities, which enable research staff to succeed in their current position, while planning their next steps.

The College attaches great importance to personal development and the need for all staff to equip themselves with key skills, not only to undertake their College

responsibilities effectively, but as a personal benefit in relation to their longer-term careers. To this extent, Imperial has had ten development days written into their research staff contracts since the PFDC was established in 2009.

The PFDC continues to grow its provision in response to the community that it supports. New initiatives are introduced annually. Highlights from 2022 include:

- Initiating and delivering 21 projects that would enhance research culture, including five large-scale scoping projects. All projects were funded by Research England.
- Delivering 56 courses to 462 participants, including the introduction of six new courses with a lens on wellbeing.
- Offering management development sessions to the Postdoc Reps Network
- Increased funding for individuals to investigate novel research ideas
- Piloting Resilient Leadership in Action to newly appointed lecturers
- Offering executive leadership coaching to Future Leader Fellows
- Relaunching Pathways for Postdocs

**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><b>Environment and Culture (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>Imperial continues to ensure that every staff member experiences a healthy and positive work environment. During 2022, the College built upon established initiatives and introduced the new <u>People Strategy 22+</u>, which was formally launched to the wider College in January 2023.</p> <p><u>Imperial Values</u> continue to be embedded across the College through an enhanced communications campaign. To aid this work, Values Champions were introduced in 2022. The Champions support the embedding of values and communication of support in their areas.</p> <p>In 2022, Imperial appointed a Staff Wellbeing Manager. Following an extensive review of current provision, they have designed and will be implementing a College-wide evidence-based mental health and wellbeing strategy in 2023. <u>A central</u></p>
---	---

hub for health and wellbeing has also been created. This completes an outstanding action from the 2021 Concordat action plan.

'The Future Of...' Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2022-2027 was launched in January 2023. The strategy outlines key objectives over the next five years that will empower every member of the Imperial community to become more active.

In response to the increase in the cost of living, a working group was created in October 2022. The purpose of the group is to consider the impacts of cost-of-living increases on both students and staff and develop a centralised plan to mitigate the impact.

Report and Support: During 2022, the team moved into a more sophisticated phase with the Report and Support Tool, establishing a termly meeting in which data is shared and interrogated, in order to increase insight and understanding to facilitate a more proactive and preventative approach. The team which spans HR, Student Services, ICU and Comms has also begun participating in the national Community of Practice, attending conferences and seminars to ensure a leading-edge approach.

The College-wide Staff Survey took place in spring 2022. 46% of research staff responded. 93% of those who responded found their work to be interesting and 92% responded that they have good working relationships with the colleagues that their job depends on. However, only 46% of respondents stated that they could meet the requirements of their job without regularly working excessive hours. There were also low satisfaction rates in relation to annual review. The College has identified four key themes that need to be addressed as a result of the survey:

- Workload;
- PRDP/Career progression;
- Health and wellbeing;
- College senior leadership.

The People Strategy 22+, the Staff Survey Action Plan and the revised 2023-25 Concordat action plan will address these themes.

### **Academic managers of researchers**

In 2022, enabled by Research England funding, Imperial commissioned comprehensive resources to be developed specifically for Principal Investigators (PIs) to support them with their Concordat obligations. The resources were developed in response to the recommendations of two scoping projects on assessing the needs of probationary lecturers and PIs. PI input was requested at every stage to ensure that the resources were tailored to their development needs. The online resources for PIs cover:

- Navigating induction and probation
- Managing yourself and your career
- Leading your research group
- Managing research projects

The resources bring together information on how to promote a healthy working environment for both themselves and the researchers they support, as well as relevant College policies and practices. This completes an outstanding action from the 2021 Concordat action plan.

The PI resources will be launched in early 2023.

### **Researchers**

Research staff continue to be made aware of the wellbeing initiatives that they can access. A wellbeing feature is included in the PFDC monthly newsletter, which highlights different services/resources that can support research staff. There are also resources dedicated to research staff on the PFDC website.

Researchers contribute to both departmental and College-wide policies through their engagement on topic-specific committees, such as departmental EDI committees or College-wide committees, including the Researcher Development

	<p>Committee which oversees the Concordat action plan. The <u>PFDC Reps Network</u> continues to work with the PFDC to lead initiatives that will create a positive research environment at Imperial.</p> <p>Researchers' opinions were sought throughout the research culture focused scoping projects that were conducted by the PFDC during 2022. The recommendations that were put forward have been taken on board by the College and helped shaped the 2023-25 Concordat action plan.</p> <p><u>Imperial as One</u>, the College's BAME staff network, organised its annual conference, <u>Beyond Ethnicity: Diversifying STEMM &amp; Business Early Career Conference</u>, which focused on how participants can grow and explore the scientific and business potential of their ideas. The event was attended by approximately 20 researchers.</p>
<p><b>Employment (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>HR created a <u>new Inclusive Recruitment webpage</u> to help support managers in getting the best person for the right job. The webpage provides advice, guidance and support on how to make every stage of the recruitment and selection process as inclusive as possible. This follows a highly successful recruitment workshop entitled 'Positive action and Know your pool'. Out of over 80 people who were invited to the workshop, 62 people attended. Nine filled out the feedback form (15% response rate). 100% said they felt more confident in working to improve local recruitment practices. This completes one of the outstanding actions from the 2021 action plan under the PI support to deliver the Concordat theme.</p> <p><u>A cross-College working group has been established to review the learning and teaching and research terms and conditions and the use of fixed-term contracts.</u> In 2022, the Research workstream group was convened to support the working group to review the research job family role criteria and the promotion process, to identify any gaps that may impact on career progression. The use of fixed-term contracts is also</p>



within their remit. Initial findings will be shared with the University Management Board in early 2023, but work is underway and will continue in this area.

An independent review of Imperial's Council took place in 2022. Recommendations included changing the composition of the Council to include a wider range of staff and student voices and to establish the new People Committee to ensure that governance has a more inclusive, people-focused approach, with representation from across Imperial's diverse community.

#### **Academic managers of researchers**

The Imperial Together Action Group have developed more support and training for senior leaders. This includes formalised inductions for senior leaders, as well as a leadership values and behaviours resource. A new 360-degree feedback tool has been piloted for managers to help raise awareness of the impact of behaviours and how to enhance the way they come across to others.

Reverse mentoring is fully embedded for all senior leaders at Imperial. It provides a forum for our diverse community to support the development of our leadership team around diversity issues in the workplace.

A pilot was undertaken to offer executive leadership coaching to UKRI Future Leaders Fellows based at Imperial during 2022. All participants in the pilot said that the confidential one-to-one coaching conversations helped them to work through current and general challenges they face and to find sustainable and motivating ways forward. Participants noted significant improvements relating to interpersonal and communication skills, as well as their work/life balance. Due to the success of the pilot, each independent fellow at Imperial will now have access to three hours of individual executive leadership coaching to develop their research leadership and group management skills.

	<p>As stated previously in the Environment and Culture section, the newly developed <u>online resources for PIs</u> will enable all PIs to engage with relevant training and development which will enhance their abilities to manage researchers effectively and fulfil their duty of care.</p> <p><b>Researchers</b></p> <p>As part of the 2021 Concordat action plan, the PFDC compiled a webpage which contains <u>a list of all the policies that are relevant to researchers</u>. The webpage has received 37 hits in the last year. More will be done to promote it to the community. Communications is a new theme that has been introduced into the 2023-25 action plan, which will ensure that this resource and others relating to the Concordat will be better publicised.</p> <p>In 2022, research staff representatives joined the Research Workstream group to review researcher terms and conditions and the use of fixed-term contracts.</p>
<p><b>Professional development (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>Imperial commissioned external consultants to conduct a full review of its annual appraisal process during 2022. The recommendations will be implemented during 2023. One of the main changes is to re-name the process from PRDP (Personal Review and Development Plan) to ARC - Yearly review (Achieve – Reflect – Career). The purpose of the new process will be to provide support and address the factors to create a positive working environment and experience for staff to work at their best.</p> <p>The new process will place a larger emphasis on the unique and particular preferences and needs of the individual and their role. This will cover five key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A review of individual contribution and impact, including demonstration of the values</li> <li>2. Reflection of learning and impact</li> <li>3. Wellbeing, working environment and workload factors</li> </ol>

4. Role and career development
5. Objective setting

This work completes the Personal Review and Development Plan (PRDP) process theme from the 2021 action plan. Further actions in this area are now covered by the People Strategy 22+.

#### **Academic managers of researchers**

As stated in the Environment and Culture section, specific resources have been developed for PIs. In the area of Professional development, a range of information has been generated to help PIs lead their research group. This includes extensive information on how to have an effective career development conversation with their researchers which was developed by Imperial's Careers Service. This completes two outstanding actions from the 2021 Concordat action plan.

#### **Researchers**

In 2022, the PFDC continued to deliver its extensive programme of professional skills and career development training, support, and opportunities for researchers. In total, 85 courses and workshops for approximately 1,628 participants were organised and 261 one-to-one meetings and 120 mock interviews were conducted.

There was a shift towards leadership development for researchers during 2022. This included the introduction of Resilient Leadership in Action for all researchers, as well as piloting executive leadership coaching with the Future Leader Fellows. Due to the success of both initiatives, they have now become cornerstones of the PFDC leadership offering. This work completes the "Leadership development for ECRs" theme from the 2021 action plan, as the initiatives that have been implemented will now become part of the PFDC's core services.

Imperial recognises that for researchers to become academics, they need to have an opportunity to develop their

research identity. The PFDC supports this through three funding schemes:

- Julia Higgins postdoc collaborative fund. This fund originated in the Faculty of Engineering, but expanded into the Faculty of Medicine during 2022. It aims to give researchers the opportunity to apply for and be awarded their own research funding, develop and deliver a collaborative research project, and take a step towards becoming independent from the research of their PI. In total, 34 applications were submitted, which resulted in 12 being funded with a total of £35,000.
- Seeds for Success. This fund aims to provide researchers with funds to work on preliminary data for a fellowship application. With the help of Research England funding, the PFDC were able to award 11 projects, with the full funds totalling £50,053.
- Wings for Ideas. This fund aims to allow researchers to work on research that might lead to a new venture, a product, or a prototype. Enabled by Research England funding, the PFDC was able to support five projects with a total of £12,235.

**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)**

In addition to working on outstanding actions from the 2021 action plan, between January and July 2022, the Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre (PFDC), whose focus is to support and develop researchers, initiated and delivered 21 projects, including five large-scale scoping projects. All projects were funded by Research England. The PFDC invested in projects that aligned with the Concordat and outstanding actions, as well as scoping projects that would lead to future initiatives that would underpin the Concordat principles at Imperial.

The scoping projects gave the following insights:

What do women need to progress in academia?

There is commendable, sustained action in this area at Imperial. However, women described multi-layered systemic challenges to progression. Ten key factors that

facilitate women's progression were identified and 15 top-level recommendations were put forward.

#### The Independent Research Fellows' 'Life-cycle' at Imperial College London: A review of fellows' experience of processes across departments

This project sought feedback from prospective and current fellows on their experiences of processes in the departments throughout the fellowship 'life-cycle,' from before applying to the end of the fellowship. The report highlights best practice, as well as gaps in provision to help improve practices and build upon the existing support in the departments.

#### Understanding ECR career perceptions

This project set out to consider the factors influencing the career perceptions of Imperial research staff, and what practical steps might be taken to encourage a balanced view of opportunities. Stakeholders identified that confidence in job-seeking strategies is low, particularly when considering non-academic roles. This included a lack of knowledge of what roles exist, as well as a lack of networks. Recommendations focused on support for self-reflection and network building, as well as ensuring that existing support is well communicated.

#### Quantifying and describing the experiences of long-term researchers (LTRs) at Imperial

Over 20% of research staff at Imperial would be defined as LTRs, having worked at Imperial for five or more years. This is higher than previously thought. The report identified three groups within the LTR community and put forward recommendations on how to better support these individuals.

#### Improving the wellbeing of early career researchers through tangible actions against bullying and harassment

The project concluded with a report showcasing the methods adopted within HE and at Imperial to tackle bullying and harassment and improve research cultures. This informed the work of an advisory board, focused on the actions needed to improve ECRs' wellbeing.

All five scoping projects gained significant interest across the College and resulted in recommendations that have been incorporated into the 2023-25 action plan and a refresh of the action themes. One key change in this action plan is to introduce more quantitative measures, such as the number of participants or increase in staff survey results, to help measure success.

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

The 2023-25 Concordat action plan has been divided into five themes:

**1. Communications of current and new College provision (new)**

While the provision offered by the College via the Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre (PFDC) is extensive, researchers are not necessarily aware of all the initiatives which are in place to help and support their development. This became clear through discussions with key stakeholders (the PFDC Reps Network, senior leaders) and the findings from the 2022 Research England-funded scoping projects. The actions laid out under this theme aim to increase awareness of existing provision amongst both the research staff and the PIs. They will do this by firstly giving research staff permission to engage with their own development (action 1.3) and then by highlighting both current (actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4) and new provision (actions 1.5, 1.6).

**2. Wellbeing of research staff (existing)**

The continued pressures due to Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis have put the wellbeing of all Imperial's researchers, especially research staff, at the centre of this action plan. The actions that have been put forward below build upon the work that the College has undertaken in this area since 2020. In the 2022 Staff Survey, only 52% of research staff who responded thought that "*Imperial does enough to support my health and wellbeing at work*", so it is evident that there is still room for improvement. The focus for the next two years is to increase the recognition of the research staff community, help them to build support networks and enhance awareness of issues that some may face across all staff groups.

**3. PI support to deliver the Concordat principles (existing)**

During 2022, Imperial commissioned a project to generate a suite of resources to equip PIs with the information they need to create a positive working environment for both themselves and the researchers they support: [Resources for PIs](#). Action 1.6 will concentrate on ensuring that these resources are known to and accessed by PIs. Following the creation of the [PI code of practice](#), an equivalent for both research staff and independently funded fellows will be generated.

**4. How postdocs utilise their ten development days (existing)**

For over ten years, all Imperial research staff have had ten development days allocated in their contracts. However, the College has not monitored how research

staff use these 10 days or compiled evidence-based examples of best practice. The College aims to help research staff to better utilise these development days, first by gaining a better understanding of what they use their days for, and then develop a series of resources which will enable them to better utilise their development days' entitlement.

### 5. Supporting talent (new)

Imperial has a wealth of talent within its researcher community. The 2021 Staff Survey showed that 72% of research staff who responded are "*satisfied with the learning and development I receive for my present job*". The scoping projects that were conducted in 2022 as part of the Research England funding highlighted particular groups where the support offered by the College could be enhanced (long-term researchers, actions 5.3 and 5.4, and independently funded fellows, actions 5.7 and 5.8). They also showed gaps in current provision that could be filled to boost the support that researchers receive (actions 5.1, 5.2, 5.5 and 5.6).

**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*)**

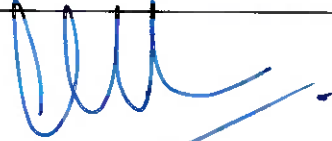
The University Research and Enterprise Board (UMEB) promotes Imperial's research profile and the development of a vibrant and inclusive research culture. The Concordat action plan is maintained and monitored by the Researcher Development Committee (RDC), which reports to the UMEB. The RDC brings together 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.

During 2022, a review was undertaken of progress made against the 2021 action plan. The initial Concordat gap analysis was re-evaluated through consultation with key stakeholders (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). The CIPG, which is composed of researchers and key service providers, reports to the RDC. Its purpose is to deliver and implement the actions from the current plan, while also assisting to direct future, Concordat action plans). The 2022 Staff Survey results were released and reviewed against the Concordat action plan and gap analysis.

These reviews and the subsequent recommendations from the scoping projects outlined above, led to the 2023-25 Concordat action plan. The revised action plan was agreed by the CIPG in November 2022, presented to the RDC in January 2023,

the UMEB in February 2023, before being ratified by the University Management Board in February 2023.

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Contact for queries: Dr Karen Hinxman (Concordat Lead), Consultant, Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre.

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](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

[www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk)