

Overview of the responses received to the consultation on the draft revised Research Careers Concordat

Responses

RCUK and Universities UK (UUK) received a number of responses to the Consultation on the draft revised Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers:

Universities: 21 responses

Sector Organisations: 13 responses

Principal Investigators: 2 responses

Researchers and Researcher Groups: 8 responses

Research Council Institutes and Groups: 5 responses

These responses varied considerably in format and both substantive comments and specific drafting suggestions for each of the sections. The latter are not detailed in this short overview. However all comments are being taken into account in the redrafting process.

Overview of Comments

The Concordat was welcomed by respondents as a way of ensuring continuation of research excellence, improving the sustainability of research careers in the UK and providing a framework for best practice across the UK HE sector.

The guiding principles were generally considered to be appropriate and useful and could be applied to all categories of staff. In particular the recognition that the responsibility for researchers' careers is not solely a concern of the employing HEIs but for all concerned was welcomed.

There was overall agreement that the wording and tone of the concordat needed to be stronger to ensure it will act as a robust framework for future progress within institutions. This would also assist in ensuring that measures are implemented to a similar degree by different HEIs.

It was suggested that the signatories could be expanded to include the Department of Health and that other organisations could be included as supporters of the Concordat.

There was consensus that implementation was key and that it will only provide a framework for future progress if considerable effort is put in place to ensure that the revised concordat will have a higher and more sustained profile than the 1996 concordat.

Respondents commented that the Concordat should take care to ensure that it covered the broad and diverse nature of staff within the research staff category. It was also felt that it needed to address head-on the issue of funding for supporting the careers of research staff. In particular research staff who undertake activities to pursue their careers, such as training or taking part in institutional activities, need to be assured that such activities will not count against them in the long run. Research institutions and funders need to make it very clear that such activities will attract the necessary recognition and will be fully funded within the grant or from core funding.

It was considered that the Concordat concentrated on the obligations of the employer, but did not adequately indicate the obligations of the funder, in particular to the costs and liabilities involved. There was a feeling that this would be crucial to ensuring implementation and commitment from funders.

It was noted that none of the guiding principles mentioned the need to promote and maintain high standards of research and that it should be undertaken in an appropriate research environment.