

**University of Birmingham**  
**Researcher Concordat Action Plan 2018-2020**  
**Progress Review**

Building on our current Strategic Framework 2015- 2020, the new 'Birmingham 2026' strategy sets clear and challenging goals to raise the academic performance of the University. To achieve these we will continue to invest in people and the intellectual environment and aim to be a destination of choice for the best researchers and students in the world. As we work towards these goals, the current 2015-2020 strategy continues to focus on

- Attracting, retaining and celebrating talented staff
- Growing leadership capacity – specifically research leadership, including supervision of research students.
- Collaboration including working with other Universities.

Following our 6-year review, our revised plan seeks to support these organisational priorities, addresses areas for further development and builds on areas of strength. The plan was developed in consultation with the cross-university Researcher Development Support Group (RDSG), which comprises senior academics, early career researchers (ECRs) and professional services representatives.

The 2018-20 plan continues to focus on four key themes: -

- Enhancing the institutional commitment to the Concordat
- Developing research leadership
- Recruiting, developing and supporting talented research staff
- Equality & diversity

**Key actions are**

- Maintain senior leader engagement with ECRs
- Review of formal review of and reporting on Concordat implementation plans
- To continue to develop and deliver excellent leadership programmes and develop new opportunities that increase our leadership capacity and capability
- Institutional review of staff induction and implementation of revised approaches
- Design and delivery of specific targeted researcher development programmes in Ethics & Integrity, Public Engagement and Research Funding
- On-going commitment to Athena Swan new awards and reaccreditation
- Submission to Race Equality Charter Scheme

The majority of actions below require “immediate” implementation, mostly during 2018. These short and medium term actions will be reviewed formally during 2018, via either the RDSG or relevant specific project groups. Actions resulting from these reviews will be added to the overall plan for 2019/20

Key Area of Focus / Action	Key Principle	Success Measure	Progress Review	
<p><b>Institutional support for and monitoring of Concordat implementation</b>            Having established more robust and formal structures to enhance our ability to meet the Concordat principles we must now embed these and ensure they support the delivery of organisational aims and objectives. Senior leadership engagement with ECRs will maintain focus on our implementation of the Concordat Principles.</p>				
1.	Researcher Development Support Group (RDSG) maintain focus on key areas identified in initial report to University Research Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PDR for ECRs</li> <li>• Induction practice</li> <li>• Career guidance</li> </ul>	1,2,4,7	Report on PDR practice complete and distributed to ECRs & College Leadership  1 report to Research Committee	A review of PDR practice in Colleges by the RDSG revealed practice in line with UoB policy while allowing for local requirements and culture. The range of specific College differences resulted in a decision by RDSG that a common set of guidance notes would not be helpful.  The institutional focus on staff induction, prompted by the VC, meant that RDSG did not need to take any significant role. Colleges, including local research support groups, have made significant progress in establishing consistent practices. (See below)  <b>Additionally</b> During 2019, Colleges reviewed local “Appraisal” practice and its potential impact of reward and recognition for ECRs. Changes applied to local practice to mitigate against this concern. Additional training to delivered for reviewers of ECRs  A report on group activity presented to Research Committee.
	12 month progress against Concordat Action Plan presented to Research Committee	2,7	Report approved by Research Committee	Report submitted and approved in January 2019
2.	In partnership with HR Director, implement ECR related actions as they emerge from the institutional review of induction and academic mentoring.	1,2,3,4	ECR induction actions identified  ≤ 10 % ECR report induction not offered  70% report induction to be useful	Institutional review of induction complete and actions implemented. Limited ECR specific actions other than those related to Probationary Performance Development and Planning process for New Lecturers. General practice and process recommendations submitted to and approved by University Executive Board. Specifically: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infographics explaining the division of responsibilities between academic and professional managers and new recruits published and circulated to Senior Leaders</li> </ul> Follow up induction survey completed May 2019 and results submitted to UEB. Key points to note: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of recommendations following 2018 survey of academic induction implemented.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite consistent checklists &amp; local guidance being implemented in four of five Colleges these continue to be used inconsistently. Only two of five Colleges' new starters report significant increase in use of an induction checklist.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> - Explore what good practice can be shared by the 2 Colleges.</p> <p><b>Additionally</b> Local ECR support groups in 2 Colleges reviewed ECR induction. These reviews reflected the same issues identified by central survey. Commitment to raise issues locally with Ops Mgr. – newly clarified process / responsibilities.</p>
	Review impact of institutional induction & mentoring recommendations.	1,2,5,7		<p>Induction survey completed May 2019. Research or Teaching focused staff on fixed term contracts who joined in the previous 12 months reported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>88% positive reaction to induction compared to 72% positive in 2017</li> </ul> <p>CROS 2019 Induction data revealed that compared to CROS 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16% reduction in ECRs not offered University Induction</li> <li>10% reduction in ECRs not offered Department Induction</li> </ul> <p>It is reasonable to assume that the increased University focus on induction is likely to have had a significant influence on these results</p>
3.	Review of purpose and degree of success of Researcher Development Support Group	1,2,5,7	ToR, membership & purpose revised or confirmed	<p>Review of this group completed. Agreed to continue and to focus on sharing practice and championing cross University issues e.g. Career support for RS</p> <p>Unfortunately, internal structural and staffing reorganisation in 2019 paused this group. However, these issues have been largely resolved and the launch of the revised Concordat has acted as a catalyst to reignite this group. In addition, the refresh of the Birmingham Academic career pathway will provide an additional consultative role for this group.</p> <p>The reconstituted group met in December 2019. This group has provided some input to this review. This group will also manage the University's response to the 2019 Concordat.</p>
4.	UoB Senior Leadership carry out follow up meetings with this years' ECR groups to review progress.	1,2,3,4	Meetings complete Report submitted to UEB	<p>The Senior Leadership met with a representative sample of ECRs during 2018 and 2019.</p> <p>Reports and action updates have been presented to UEB following each meeting.</p>

5.	UoB Senior Leadership carry out new breakfast meetings with a different group of early-career academics	1,2,3,4	Meetings complete  Report submitted to UEB	ECR meetings now regular fixture in the calendar. VC, Provost & Registrar meet groups 3 time per year. 1 <sup>st</sup> carried out Nov 18. Key themes to emerge from these discussions were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring of Academic Staff</li> <li>• Post award support</li> <li>• Education issues – various</li> <li>• Recruitment / succession of leaders</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• Engagement on plans/current activity/policy development</li> </ul>
6.	Heads of College to work with Heads of School to review approach to induction and identify opportunities to improve this at School-level.	1,2,3,4	Report submitted to UEB	Following a report to UEB, a review of the approach to academic induction was driven from the centre. Improved guidelines and materials now available.
7.	Heads of College to work with Heads of School to review approach to mentoring and identify opportunities to improve this at School-level.	1,2,3,4	Report submitted to UEB	Following report to UEB, training for Probationary Academic Mentors provided across all Colleges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 111 Probationary Mentors trained 2018/19</li> </ul> <p>Currently reviewing the need for ongoing local support – central provision available</p>
8.	Director of HR, to review central induction in light of ECR feedback	1,2,3,4	Institutional review of Induction practice commissioned  Findings and recommendations submitted to UEB	COMPLETE – see above
<b>Research Leadership &amp; Management</b>				
Effective leadership and management are critical to our success. Continue to build academic leadership and management capability.				
9.	<b>Training &amp; Development</b> Senior Leaders' Programme (SLP) – 1 programme pa. Research Leaders' Programme (RLP) – 1 programme pa. Emerging Leaders' Programme (ELP) – 2 programmes 2017/18; 3 programmes 2018/19 Research / Academic Team Leader Programmes (R/ATL) Two programmes pa.	1,2,4	Programmes run at ≥90% capacity	All programmes progressing as scheduled. High demand resulted in delivery of additional Academic Team Leader programme. All programmes running at >87% capacity.  <b>Participants 2017-2019</b> SLP – 51 = 94% RLP – 52 = 96% ELP – 118 = 93% R/ATL – 87 = 87%  2019/20 schedule is the same as for 2018/19

10.	Evaluate behavioural impact of RLP DRATL	1,2,4	Participants report changes to personal leadership & management practice and performance	<p>Research Leaders Programme ongoing evaluation revealed a number of leadership impacts for participants including, creating vision, trusting and involving teams, delegating and adapting leadership style.</p> <p>Long-term evaluation of recent Research &amp; Academic Team Leader programmes has been attempted but response is limited. Key benefits reported are the opportunity to work with peers and learn from each other's experiences, appreciating difference in leading teams. A key are to develop within these programmes is exploring aspects of Equality &amp; Diversity. This has been addressed in the 2019/20 programmes.</p>
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### Recruitment, development and support of talented research staff

Local researcher development groups are now established across all Colleges. These groups will continue to be key to developing a community of early career researchers and providing locally focused support and development opportunities. RS input and feedback will continue to drive the work of these groups and inform cross-institutional activity via the RDSG.

11.	CEPS revised approaches to Induction, Mentoring & PDR to be implemented and reviewed	1,2,3,4	90% CEPS ECR staff report receiving induction 70% report induction to be useful	<p>Most progress made on induction, in line with University focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New starters identified and communicated. Working on fine tuning associated reports from new HR systems implemented Spring 2019</li> <li>• Working group set up to review induction.</li> <li>• Standardised templates created and implemented.</li> <li>• Local induction web pages created for all schools.</li> </ul> <p>Review of induction materials since initial implementation resulted in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More detailed information being added</li> <li>• More tailoring for new starter to monitor own induction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Additionally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot of "speed dating" induction meeting for new starters to meet important central College based services.</li> <li>• Pilot scheme to fund selected researchers, from underrepresented groups, to extend contract specifically to focus on building personal profile. Limited funding, but has led to ongoing discussion with funder to explore ongoing commitment to the concept.</li> </ul> <p><b>CROS Induction data for College</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant reduction in new ECRs not offered Department or Role Induction 2019 - 33% (2017 60%Dept; 36%Role)</li> <li>• Significant increase in positive response to departmental and role inductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2019 65% found department induction useful c/w 2017 (28%)</li> <li>○ 2019 87% found role induction useful c/w 2017 (52%)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	In partnership with HR colleagues agree communication process for informing College of new starters			
	School Operations Managers formally allocated responsibility for managing local induction process			
	Standardised ECR induction checklist template created			
	Local induction briefing videos agreed and created			
	Local CEPS induction webpage created to signpost relevant information			

12.	Deliver dedicated PDR reviewer training within CEPS	1,2,3,4	80% CEPS ECR staff report having a PDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to CROS 2019, while 65% of ECRs across the University report receiving a PDR in 2018/19, this is only 58% in CEPS. These represent similar reductions in participation when compared to 2017 figures (UoB 72%, 64%)</li> <li>This is a disappointing outcome and must be investigated further. Training of reviewers will not significantly affect this figure. Discussions are already underway within the College to carry out a specific survey of all staff. This will seek to build a more detailed picture of PDR participation and usefulness locally. It is anticipated that a locally managed review will have greater impact.</li> <li>The centrally delivered PDR training programme has however, been revised to focus specifically on the Academic context and environment.</li> </ul>
	Explore alternative mentoring approaches to include opportunities for ECRs	1,2,3,4	Proposal for formal mentoring approach made to College Board	CMDS has launched a pilot mentoring scheme for 2019/20. This has successfully matched 18 early career researchers to a variety of more senior academic colleagues depending on mentoring need. This pilot will be evaluated in 2020.
13.	Review of CEPS induction, PDR and mentoring actions to identify appropriate actions to be recommended in other Colleges.	1,2,3,4,5,7	Actions identified and initial plan agreed for implementation	A change in College leadership roles prevented this action from being completed.
<p><b>Learning &amp; Development</b></p> <p>Based on CROS and local feedback, key learning and development priorities continue to be career development &amp; planning, research and associated skills and leadership skills. Existing local and central provision will be maintained in these key areas, supplemented with specific locally identified support. Additional specific actions are identified below.</p>				
14.	Following consistent feedback, an initial proposal to provide dedicated, specialist careers guidance for ECRs was approved in principle. More detailed work is now proposed to scope a solution including purpose, funding and accountability.	3,4	Detailed proposal submitted to Research Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An initial proposal submitted to RS Committee. Unfortunately funding for new staff was not available at the time due to constraints on staff recruitment in the University's overall budget. It was reaffirmed that the University's general careers support is available to ECRs. An alternative proposal that the PG careers advisor might take on this role was not feasible due to the existing workload for that individual.</li> <li>The increased emphasis on careers support and guidance in the New Concordat provides the opportunity to revisit this proposal.</li> <li>Local researcher support groups however increased the range of career focused development activities throughout 2018/19. This included seminars on careers within and without academia, academic and non-academic CV workshops and promotion workshops. MDS is currently piloting an ECR career focused mentoring programme.</li> </ul>
15.	Following feedback and review of demand & current provision, an integrated programme of training and development in Public Engagement in	3,4	Pilot Level 1 delivered Pilot level 2 delivered Pilot level 3 delivered	<p>During 2018/19 1001 hours of development were delivered by the PER team. This was split</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>37% Level 1 - Intro or basic level</li> <li>40% Level 2 - some experience / building skills</li> </ul>

	Research (PER) will be developed and launched to meet the needs of researchers at all career stages.		Evaluation of all programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23% Level 3 - advanced / in-depth.</li> </ul> Evaluation of the programmes is yet to be completed.
16.	A project has been agreed, to develop a single, clearly articulated, accessible and consistently promoted annualised programme to equip academics with the skills and knowledge to compete successfully for funding.	3,4	Proposed training programme presented  Training programme implemented	As indicated above, experience indicates local provision is more helpful and results in better engagement. Therefore no centralised programme developed. However, each College has developed its own tailored approach.  <b>CMDS</b> – Creation of Fellowships & Grants Academy to deliver funder focused workshops focused on eligibility, grant writing, impact and specific fellowship application support <b>LES</b> – Res Support Introductory sessions 20 staff Targeted cohort programme to increase grant capture 70+ 2018/19 Piloting Future Fellows programme 2020 – 14 nominations received. <b>CoSS</b> – Grant Writing sessions focusing on specific elements e.g. Lay summary, Costing, Pathways to impact, support statements. Broader sessions on developing bidding strategies & eligibility for funding streams. Limited participation data – variety of audiences. <b>CEPS</b> – Discipline focused programmes supporting grant capture for the full range of researcher career stages. 536 attendees for 2018, 520 for 2019 including group and individual sessions. <b>CAL</b> – similar range of provision as other Colleges including, discipline and career stage specific and pre & post award support. 101 attendees recorded.
17.	A lack of training and resource to support researchers’ development in research integrity issues has been identified. Research Committee has agreed that : - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A training officer role is considered within the research ethics and integrity team</li> <li>A high quality interactive UoB ethics and integrity online training module be planned and produced</li> </ul>	3,4	Detailed proposal for the Training officer role is submitted  Online training module available for use. 80% new staff complete module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal for Training Officer submitted – however budget constraints prevented implementation</li> <li>On-line Ethics training programmes developed &amp; implemented. New classroom and tailored face-to-face modules in Ethics &amp; Governance were also developed to integrate with on-line materials.</li> <li>Ethics &amp; Governance team are reviewing the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This will inform revised training provision and associated expectation.</li> </ul>
18.	Formal evaluation of annual researcher development programme	3,4	80% recommend  Participants report changes to personal leadership & management practice and performance	In CEPS/ CLES a review of ECR feedback and requirements identified 2 key strands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic skills - Research related skills &amp; knowledge and teaching</li> <li>Careers seminars.</li> </ul> Following implementation of a local programme based on the review 413 participants attended in 2018/19. This reflects a 4% increase in ECR engagement with local development programme over 2017/18. Evaluation feedback revealed

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% positive responses</li> <li>98% would recommend to colleagues</li> </ul> <p>A reducing demand for central programmes is clear. Only Grant and Journal Writing programmes have consistently high demand. 119 participants since January 2018 with 88% positive response to post course evaluation. 100% positive response to follow up evaluation, which also identifies a variety of behavioural impacts.</p> <p>The POD delivered Impact and Engagement workshop was removed in 2018 due to low demand. However, there is reasonable engagement in similar development provided by the specialist Public Engagement in Research team. (See above) Similarly, the Career Planning workshop delivered by POD has been withdrawn from the 2020/21 programme, despite apparent demand via local, CROS and sector feedback. However, local career focused activities in this area are well attended. This further reinforces the observation that researchers engage more with local activity.</p>
19.	Review of CMDS researcher development programme evaluation survey	3,4	<p>Report &amp; recommendations presented to PERCAT &amp; RDSG</p> <p>Recommendations implemented in CMDS</p>	<p>52% respondents have attended PERCAT activities. 87% found them relevant and helpful. Of those not attending a number reported the challenge of managing the demands of various conflicting priorities.</p> <p>A significant number of comments referred to the need for specific early career guidance including for those not intending to follow an academic pathway.</p> <p>2019/20 MDS PERCAT development programme has been revised to address some of the concerns raised. Specifically more career development focused activities.</p>
20.	All Colleges have local information portal / resource	3,4	Information portals established	COMPLETE 2018
<b>Equality &amp; Diversity</b>				
Our aim is that all staff are treated with dignity and afforded respect as key aspects of their wellbeing. We will build on existing success in this area.				
21.	Submission to the Race Equality Charter scheme	6	Application submitted	Consolidating ED&I action planning and submissions. Institution REC submission has been moved to Feb 2020 to accommodate College actions and to align with an overall updated Equality Scheme in 2020
22.	To implement College Level Equality Action plans	6	Action plans published	Now scheduled for 2020 to align with institutional plans and to be included in Athena Swan action plans
23.	Remaining 2 STEMM Schools to obtain Athena Swan awards	6	Award obtained	One submitted November 2019 second planned for April 2020
24.	Schools to seek renewal or enhanced Athena Swan award as appropriate	6	Awards obtained	Ongoing plans as per renewal schedule
25.	CAL / CoSS to seek Athena Swan award	6	Award obtained	2 schools achieved Bronze to date, remaining working towards

<b>Evaluation of Action Plan</b>				
The RDSG will coordinate overall evaluation including the specific input from ECRs. CROS survey and other internal systems will provide specific evaluation data. However, due to an inconsistent approach to gathering feedback and use of CROS data it is proposed to review our approach to these. Approaches to evaluation of this action plan may change because of this review.				
26.	Review and agree revised approach to monitoring of Concordat implementation activities	5,7	Schedule of HR Ex reports to RDSG and HRD agreed	Agreed annual update to Research Committee sufficient
27.	Formal review of Concordat Action Plan to update and add further actions for 2019	5,7	Additional actions identified and scheduled for 2019  Review approved by PVC Research	The review and updated action plan was presented to and subsequently approved by the Research Committee January 2019
28.	Review College involvement in CROS survey and subsequent use of data.	5,7	Review and agreement on responsibilities with College representatives  Revised approach implemented for CROS 2019	Colleges were involved earlier in planning and implementation of CROS 19. Specifically in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of target population</li> <li>• Targeted local communication / engagement.</li> </ul> Colleges have since committed to analysis and action on local data. CAL results discussed at College Research Committee. School research leads tasked to take actions forward. Meetings with ECRs scheduled to explore results further.
29.	Birmingham will take part in CROS 2019	5,7	35% participation  Summary of CROS 2019 data presented to University Research Committee	University level CROS data analysed, summarised and presented to PVC Research. Unfortunately, the results of the survey appear to have remained static in comparison to 2017. There are no significant increases in positive results. Response rates were 5% higher across 4 of the 5 Colleges, although only 19% across the University. The 5 <sup>th</sup> College may have suffered due to broadening of the targeted population, which resulted in a 23% increase in possible respondents and an eventual 8% reduction in response rate compared with 2017.  <b>ACTION</b> Both University and College level data in conjunction with internal staff engagement survey will inform our approach to implementing the revised Concordat.

## **Glossary**

CAL – College of Arts and Law

CEPS – College of Engineering and Physical Sciences

CLES – College of Life & Environmental Sciences

CMDS – College of Medical & Dental Sciences

College – Principle academic organisational unit within the University of Birmingham

CoSS – College of Social Sciences

CROS – Careers in Research On-line Survey (national researcher survey)

DRATL – Developing as a Research / Academic Team Leader

ELP – Emerging Leaders Programme

HR – Human Resources

HRLT – HR Leadership Team

PDR – Performance Development Review scheme.

POD – People and Organisational Development. Team within University HR Department

PVC – Pro-Vice-Chancellor

RDSG – Researcher Development Support Group

R&KT – Research & Knowledge Transfer

RIS – Research Innovation Services

RLP – Research Leaders Programme

SLP – Senior Leaders Programme

STEMM – Science Technology Engineering Mathematics and Medicine

ToR – Terms of Reference

UEB – University Executive Board

UoB – University of Birmingham