

University of Birmingham Researcher Concordat Action Plan 2020-22

Birmingham 2026 is an ambitious yet achievable plan to raise the academic performance of the University by growing research activity and increasing our student and staff numbers over the next decade. This includes the aim to recruit 1400 new academics and research focused staff. To facilitate this ambition the University is embarking on two important initiatives, which will underpin our commitment to the Concordat

Strategic Framework 2020 – 2025. On the back of the success of our 2015-2020 Strategic Framework, [Making Important Things Happen](#), the new Strategic Framework will continue the direction of travel set, and will enable us to face new challenges in an increasingly competitive environment. It will, as before, serve as a "compass, not a roadmap" to guide University decision-making. This includes a specific theme on People and Culture, and recognises the central importance of people to delivering our strategy, and the ways in which we can continue to develop a vibrant culture. Key aspects will include academic career pathways, equality and diversity, and workplace wellbeing. All staff are invited to contribute to developing this important document that “defines the University’s direction and ambition for itself”.

Birmingham Academic Career Framework. We have begun the process of refreshing this framework. The project will encompass consideration of the career pathways, promotions criteria, and an academic development programme for new academic staff. As part of this work, we are acutely aware of ensuring career development support for academic staff below the level of Lecturer (or equivalent), e.g. teaching fellows or research fellows. We have therefore identified a specific “Early Career Staff” (ECS) work-stream. This clearly aligns with the target population of the 2019 Concordat. Its key milestones is “A programme of support for the development and progression of early career staff to be devised and embedded in each College”. This work, in conjunction with the other work-streams, will create a consistent environment and supporting framework across the University for new and developing academic staff.

This revised plan focuses initially on these core institutional activities. The outcomes of these strategic projects, plus the results from our latest institutional “Have Your Say” (HYS) survey launched in January 2020, will inform more detailed researcher focused activities in 2020/21. This maintains our consistent principle that HR best practice is applied across the entire University to develop the most appropriate environment for all staff, including those engaged in research.

The now well established local researcher development and support groups will continue to provide programmes of activity to meet local demands and priorities. Where demand and relevant expertise exists, centrally delivered programmes will enhance overall provision e.g. leadership and management, public engagement, education.

Key actions will be to: -

- Develop and articulate clear organisational principles that underpin the “People & Strategy” strand of the new Strategic Framework
- Re-establish the Researcher Development Support Group (RDSG)
- The University of Birmingham (UoB) formally signs up to the new Researcher Concordat
- Produce an academic development programme to support new and early career academic staff.
- Identify key researcher related actions emerging from the Have Your Say survey.

Key Area of Focus / Action	Key Principle	Success Measure	By When	Who	
Environment & Culture					
Institutional commitment to developing a supportive and productive researcher environment and transition to new Concordat. 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 ECSs will maintain focus on our implementation of the Concordat Principles.					
1.	As part of the Strategic Framework 2020-25, develop and articulate clear organisational principles that underpin the “People & Strategy” strand of the new Strategic Framework including targeted actions to support ECS development	1,2,6	Key principles presented to University Council Strategic framework 2020-25 approved by Senate & Council	June 2020 July 2020	Project Group
2.	Re-establish and strengthen the role and profile of the Researcher Development Support Group. (RDSG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise membership to ensure appropriate mix of senior leadership, senior academic staff and early career staff. • Group regularly reviews progress against Concordat action plan • Group manages UoB participation in revised CROS 	2,3,4,5	Each College represented by at least one senior academic and one early career member of staff.	January 2020 Biannually from January 2020 TBC	RDSG
	12 month progress against Concordat Action Plan presented to Research Committee	2,7	Report approved by Research Committee	January 2021	RDSG
3.	UoB signs 2019 Researcher Concordat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a gap analysis against the 2019 Researcher Concordat • All academic staff are aware of the University’s commitment to the Concordat and our key areas of focus. 	1,2	Report, including priority actions presented to PVC Research Signature formally submitted Communication to all academic staff highlighting commitment to The Concordat and key areas of focus for UoB	March 2020 TBC	RDSG

4.	UoB Senior Leadership carry out ongoing meetings with ECS groups to review progress and identify additional areas of concern	1,2,3,4	Three meetings complete per annum Report submitted to University Executive Board (UEB)	September 2020 and on going.	UoB Senior Leadership Team
5.	Internal staff engagement survey (HYS) implemented and analysed with respect to researcher responses	7	High level results Researcher specific results analysed & presented to ECRDG	March 2020 May 2020	HYS project group ECRDG sub group
6.	All Colleges will complete a review of CROS data and present recommendations to College leadership.	1,2,5,7	Findings & recommendations presented to College Board	April 2020	PERCAT sub-groups and College leads
Research Leadership & Management					
We continue to invest in supporting our leaders and managers. We will increase our provision in this area.					
7.	Training & Development SLP – 1 programme 2019/20; 2 programmes 2020/21 RLP – 1 programme pa. ELP – 3 programmes 2019/20; 4 programmes 2020/21 RATL – 3 programmes pa.	1,2,4	Programmes run at $\geq 85\%$ capacity	On-going	POD

Employment / Professional & Career Development

Recruitment, development and support of talented research staff

We have ambitious plans to refresh the Birmingham Academic Career Framework (BACF), which will encompass consideration of the career pathways, promotions criteria, and an academic development programme for new academic staff. An important element of this work will be to develop further career development support for academic staff below the level of Lecturer (or equivalent), e.g. teaching fellows or research fellows.

We will continue to support the work of local researcher support and development groups in their work to build a community of early career researchers and provide locally focused support and development opportunities. Research Staff input and feedback will continue to drive the work of these groups and inform cross-institutional activity via the RDSG.

8.	Review and clearly articulate potential academic career pathways, taking in to account non-traditional routes.	2,3,4	Proposal approved by Senate	November 2020	BACF Project group
	In alignment with the proposed career pathways, produce a proposed academic development programme to support new and early career academic staff.	3,4	Proposal approved by Senate	November 2020	BACF Project group
	Review and determine new processes to support the performance and development of new academic staff.	2,3,4	Proposal approved by Senate	November 2020	BACF Project group
9.	Following consistent feedback from researchers, and an initial review of 2019 Concordat, revisit the possibility of providing dedicated professional careers guidance support for research staff.	3,4	Detailed proposal submitted to Research Committee and the appropriate Professional Services leads for inclusion in the University annual budget setting process	March 2020	RDSG / Careers Network
10.	All Colleges will deliver a programme of researcher development activities in response to local demand	3,4,5	Annual programme of development activity published and delivered	Annually	PERCAT / ECARS
11.	Detailed review of engagement with and quality of early career PDR discussions.	2,3,4	Recommendations submitted to DPVC (Staffing) Actions initiated by Colleges	November 2020	RDSG / Colleges

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion					
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.					
12.	Submission to the Race Equality Charter scheme	6	Application submitted	Feb 2020	ED&I Team
13.	Implement College Level Equality Action plans as part of University Equality Scheme	6	Action plans published	Jan 2021	College Board
14.	Remaining 2 STEMM Schools to obtain Athena Swan awards	6	Award obtained	April 2020	College Board
15.	Schools to seek renewal or enhanced Athena Swan award as appropriate	6	Awards obtained	As per renewal schedule	College Board
Evaluation of Action Plan					
The reconstituted RDSG will coordinate overall evaluation including the specific input from ECSs. CROS survey and HYS. 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 as a result of this review.					
16.	Review and agree revised approach to monitoring of Concordat implementation activities	5,7	Schedule of HR Ex reports to RDSG and HRD agreed	June 2020	RDSG
17.	As part of BACF Early Career Work-stream, propose a set of impact evaluation measures for the proposed development programme.	5,7	Evaluation measures presented	November 2020	BACF Wk. Stream 5
18.	Review of internal Staff Survey (HYS) data for research focused staff	5,7	3 key areas for action identified per College and presented to College leadership	September 2020	RDSG
19.	Subject to timings in relation to internal Staff Survey Birmingham will take part in revised CROS. Data will be compared with CROS 2019. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree consistent approach to reviewing and presenting local survey data to College senior management 	5,7	30% participation Approach clearly defined as schedule of actions for RDSG Summary of new CROS data presented to Research Committee Summary of college CROS results presented to College leadership	TBC TBC	RDSG, POD, Colleges
20.	Evaluation of a number of ED&I specific actions will be via the institutional Athena Swan action plan	5,6,7	Athena Swan action plan monitored and evaluated as part of institutional E&D activity and Athena Swan renewal programme.	On-going	DPVC Equalities

Glossary

BACF – Birmingham Academic Career Framework
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)
DPVC – Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor
ED&I – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
ECS – Early Career Staff
ELP – Emerging Leaders Programme
HR – Human Resources
HRLT – HR Leadership Team
HYS – Have Your Say. Internal staff engagement survey
PDR – Performance Development Review scheme.
POD – People and Organisational Development. Team within University HR Department
PVC – Pro-Vice-Chancellor
RATL – Developing as a Research / Academic Team Leader
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