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Action plan 2025-2027 - The Concordat for the Support of the Career Development of Researchers
Timeframe: from February 2025 to February 2027

The Concordat for the Support of the Career Development of Researchers (hereafter "the Concordat"), is a strategic driver for both research and researcher development across the higher education sector in the UK. Imperial is dedicated to creating a positive research culture and to providing sector-leading support and professional development to all its researchers and became a signatory of the new Concordat to support the career development of researchers (pdf) in March 2020.

The Concordat is an agreement between funders and employers of researchers in the UK. It aims to set the "gold standard of researcher development" by committing funders, institutions, researchers and managers of researchers to create a healthy and supportive research environment and culture for researchers to realise their potential.

Imperial has delivered two full action plans (2021-2023 and 2023-2025). During 2024, a review was undertaken of the progress made against the 2023-2025 action plan, this alongside the results of the 2024 Staff Survey and the new Imperial Strategy informed the actions in the 2025-2027 Concordat action plan.

The Concordat action plan (25-27) was prepared by the Concordat Implementation and planning group in consultation with all stakeholders, reviewed and approved by the Researcher Development Committee and is submitted for approval to UREB.

The associated actions Imperial takes to improve research culture can factor into REF Environment narratives. All actions below are designed to contribute to both narrative and quantitative baseline and yearly results to support the REF People and Culture Environment (PCE) programme (full list of REF PCE indicators to be confirmed late 2025).

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Governance

This Concordat action plan has a two-year focus (2025-27). The action plan is monitored and maintained by the Researcher Development Committee (Chair: Professor Ramon Vilar Compte, reports to: University Research and Enterprise Board). The 2025-27 Concordat action plan was shared with the University Research and Enterprise Board and University Management Board (UMB) during February 2025 as part of the Colleges internal review process for ratification.

The Researcher Development Committee will ensure that the Concordat action plan complements other key initiatives, such as the Mental health and Wellbeing Action plan, Athena Swan action plan, REC action plan and other Imperial action plans, including the Imperial Strategy, and will oversee the completion of the actions set out below.

Obligations of Institutions, under the Concordat (lifted from the [Concordat document](#)):

(1) **Environment and Culture** - Excellent research requires a supportive and inclusive research culture.

(2) **Employment** - Researchers are recruited, employed and managed under conditions that recognise and value their contributions.

(3) **Professional and career development** - Professional and career development are integral to enabling researchers to develop their full potential.

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(1) Environment and Culture

1. Ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the Concordat **- Business as usual with ongoing actions and monitoring.**

2. Ensure that institutional policies and practices relevant to researchers are inclusive, equitable and transparent, and are well-communicated to researchers and their managers **- Business as usual with ongoing actions and monitoring.**

3. Promote good mental health and wellbeing through, for example, the effective management of workloads and people, and effective policies and practice for tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment, including providing appropriate support for those reporting issues **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

4. Ensure that managers of researchers are effectively trained in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, wellbeing and mental health **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

5. Ensure researchers and their managers are aware of, and act in accordance with, the highest standards of research integrity **– Action needed.**

6. Regularly review and report on the quality of the research environment and culture, including seeking feedback from researchers, and use the outcomes to improve institutional practices **– Action needed.**

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Action points:

Action	Delivery partner(s) & lead	Activities	Timeline (start)	Intended Outcomes & Success Measures
1.1 Increase the Concordat awareness for researchers, academic and support staff	ECRI/RDC teams a) Concordat Lead/RDC Chair b) Concordat Lead c) ECRI Champions lead / ECRI Champions lead d) Concordat Lead/POD lead e) Concordat lead	a) Staff briefing piece from RDC b) Create a communications plan for Concordat related activities c) Postdoc and Fellows reps and ECRI Postdoc and Fellows Champions to be Concordat Champions – creation of 'The Concordat and I' tip sheets d) Implementation and monitoring of Research Staff/ Academic and Support staff pulse surveys to gauge concordat awareness (frequency – every 3 months) e) Align the Imperial Concordat actions to the REF PCE Element for REF 2029	a) Spring 2025 b) Autumn 2025 c) Autumn 2025 d) Autumn 2025 e) Spring 2026	Intended outcomes: - Everyone understanding why the Concordat is a tool for supporting the careers of researchers and the overall research culture of Imperial. Success measures: - Awareness of the Concordat within the Academic community to increase by 5% year on year measured by Concordat pulse survey.
1.2 Improve awareness of rights and responsibilities for line managers of researchers and researchers especially around EDI, Mental Health, Open Access and Research integrity	ECRI/ODI/Research Office/Library a) Concordat Lead/POD lead (MHWB Strategy Implementation – induction) b) ECRI Research integrity lead/ECRI induction lead/RO lead/POD induction lead c) ECRI leadership Leads/POD leads d) ECRI Open access lead/Library Lead	a) Ensure PI/ Research staff roles and responsibilities include EDI and Mental health considerations and Open Access and Research integrity b) Disseminate Research integrity training and ensure all Researchers and Academics engage with the Research Integrity online module as part of their induction. c) Ensure EDI / mental health / research integrity are embedded in leadership training programmes	a) Spring 2025 b) Autumn 2025 and Yearly monitoring c) Winter 2025/ Spring 2026 d) Summer 2026 and Yearly monitoring	Intended outcomes: - Normalise conversations about mental health and wellbeing in all research and academic roles. - Increase confidence of line managers and researchers in challenging discriminating situations - Ensuring researchers and academics understand Imperial's Open access activities and are compliant with Research Integrity

		d) Deliver more sessions on Open Access to Researchers and Line Managers of researchers		Success measures: - Increase awareness and engagement of Researchers and Academics with mental health and wellbeing provision by 10% by 2027 (baseline results from 2024 survey) - Improved staff survey results around mental health and wellbeing - Increase engagement with Open Access and Research Integrity
1.3 Improve Support for peer led networks	ECRI / Departments a) ECRI network lead b) ECRI network lead c) ECRI leads / ECRI comms / ECRI Champions / ECRI Reps	a) Identify and support existing ECR-led networks increasing their visibility and reach (IPFEN/Academic Women Association/Black postdoctoral network) b) Establish a network for Long Term Researchers c) Gauge interest in a Staff Association/Assembly to allow Research staff to come together, build networks, support each other, have a voice, and stay informed	a) Autmn/Winter 2025 b) Summer 2026 c) Autumn 2026	Intended Outcomes: - Increased sense of belonging and support - Integration of Researcher led networks with ECRI and ECRI reps Measures of Success: - Improved staff survey results for community and belonging
1.4 Improve structures for Research staff to network and collaborate	a) ECRI Induction lead / Concordat Lead and Imperial profiles team b) RE ECR conference lead a) ECRI network lead/Daniela Bultoc	a) Raise awareness of Imperial Profiles and provide feedback to improve Imperial Profiles as a tool. b) ECR conference day (Research England funding secured) c) Encourage Research staff to network and attend ongoing	a) Spring 2025 b) Planning starts early in the year for Summer event c) Summer 2026	Intended Outcomes: - Dynamise the Researcher Community - Increase collaborations between departments Measures of success:

		and new events including: Hot topic lunches / Drop-in sessions / Quiz-type socials / Wellbeing cafés (build on Departmental / POD's provision)		- Increased feelings of community – improved staff survey results - Increase in funding applications with increased interdepartmental collaborators

1.5 Clarify processes for Fellowship support at Imperial and Departmental level	ECRI / Research Office / Departmental managers / Faculty Research Committees
	a) Concordat Lead / RO lead
	b) ECRI Champions lead / RO lead
		a) Map support/procedures that exist at the Section / Department / Faculty level
		b) Meeting with Departmental research managers and Faculty research committees to:
		  a. Update webpages template from 2023 action with Fellowship support
		  b. Disseminate best practice for fellowship support pre-award and post award
			a) Spring 2026
			b) Summer 2026
				Intended Outcomes:
				- Standardize and ensure equal opportunities for (internal and external) people applying for fellowships in all departments
				- Clarify processes and procedures
				Measures of Success:
				- Increased access to departmental webpages for fellowship support
				- Increased number and diversity of applicants to internal and external fellowships

1.6 Improve structures to increase Research Staff recognition	a) ECRI Awards lead b) ECRI awards lead / ECRI Reps lead	Recognition of Research Staff: a) Improve awareness of and applications/nominations for different Research staff awards for both president and ECRI awards. b) Investigate the existence of departmental awards	Spring 2026	Intended Outcomes: - Increased visibility of research staff at all levels - Increased valorisation of research staff by peers and networks Measures of Success: - Increased number of applications/nominations to research staff awards - Improved staff survey results in terms of

				reward, recognition and valorisation of work.
1.7 Consolidate structures to increase Research Staff representation, and voice at supra-Faculty level	ECRI / RDC teams a) Concordat Lead/ECRI Reps lead	Representation of Research Staff at University level. Mapping of ECR representation at Imperial wide level (Faculty and above) - query why (or why not) Research Staff is represented and at what level and have them represented where Postgraduate students are (as appropriate).	Autumn 2025	Intended Outcomes: - Improved communications around representation and where research staff has a voice Measures of Success: - Research staff represented at Faculty-wide and Imperial-wide committees - Improved staff survey results in terms of reward, recognition and valorisation of work.

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(2) Employment

1. Ensure open, transparent and merit-based recruitment, which attracts excellent researchers, using fair and inclusive selection and appointment practices **- Business as usual with ongoing actions and monitoring.**

2. Provide an effective induction, ensuring that researchers are integrated into the community and are aware of policies and practices relevant to their position **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

3. Provide clear and transparent merit-based recognition, reward and promotion pathways that recognise the full range of researchers' contributions, and the diversity of personal circumstances **– Action needed.**

4. Provide effective line and project management training opportunities for managers of researchers, heads of department and equivalent **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

5. Ensure that excellent people management is championed throughout the organisation and embedded in institutional culture, through annual appraisals, transparent promotion criteria, and workload allocation **- Business as usual with ongoing actions and monitoring.**

6. Seek to improve job security for researchers, for example through more effective redeployment processes and greater use of open-ended contracts, and report on progress **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

7. Consider researchers and their managers as key stakeholders within the institution and provide them with formal opportunities to engage with relevant organisational policy and decision-making **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

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Action points:

Action	Delivery partner(s) & lead	Activities	Timeline (start)	Intended Outcomes & Success Measures
2.1 Improve induction processes for new Research Staff at Imperial	ECRI/ HR / Reps / Champions / HR faculty partners / Departmental managers a) Concordat Lead / HR lead b) ECRI Induction leads c) Concordat Lead/HR lead d) ECRI Network lead	a) Improved information for the start of research job family contracts – review FAQs with Reps and include probation information – FAQs and information sheet for line managers / researchers / Reps and Champions. b) ongoing review of Postdoc and Fellows Welcome booklet and of departmental welcome information with the Reps and Champions. c) Clarify support for international researchers and visa information on the website and review information for line managers/hiring managers. d) Identify best practice in departmental researcher buddy schemes, create a toolkit/how-to resource for upscaling.	a) Autumn 2025 b) Autumn 2025 c) Winter 25/26 d) Autumn 2026 - upscale 2027	Intended outcomes - Making sure researchers start their new role and feel integrated in the community - Ensuring information is accessible to anyone wanting to join Imperial (pre and post application). - Improve support for newly appointed research staff to navigate the department/Imperial Success measures: - Improve probation metrics for research staff – check baseline compliance from line managers and make sure at least 80% are completing probation reports for their teams - Improve start of contract and settling in processes for any new research staff via pulse survey
2.2 Review and map promotions for research Staff	ECRI/HR a) Concordat Lead/POD lead b) Concordat Lead/POD lead c) ECRI Champions lead / POD lead	a) Creation of ARC Case studies for Research Staff for Imperial webpages b) Ensure information is available for researchers and line managers of researchers around ARC conversations and research staff promotions. Review ARC and Promotion FAQs with ECRI Champions and Reps.	a) Autumn 2025 b) Winter 25/26 c) In line with new ARC resources – Winter 2025/26	Intended Outcomes: - Better conversations for Research Staff around career progression / transitions / workload and mental health and wellbeing - Better understanding of the promotions processes for Research Staff at all levels

	d) ECRI Reps lead/HR lead	c) Ensure ECRI Postdoc and Fellows Champions understand the ARC process so they can act as ARC champions – create a tip sheet d) Creation of Research Staff Promotion case studies for Imperial webpages	d) Autumn 2026	- Increase openness of Line managers to talk about and signpost researchers to all types of career options Measures of Success: - Increase in ARC uptake from research staff (currently around 50%) - Increased satisfaction on Staff survey results around recognition and promotion, as well as support from line managers.

2.3 Improve end of contract information for Research Staff including Open-ended contracts	a) Concordat Lead/ECRI Reps lead/HR partner
	b) Concordat Lead/ ECRI Reps lead/HR partner
	c) HR lead/Concordat Lead
		a) Improve understanding of HR processes for researchers especially at the end of contracts – creation and review of FAQs for Researchers by Reps.
		b) Creation / review of redeployment process FAQs for Researchers
		c) Look at website wording around fixed term-workers and open-ended contracts and improve it for Research Staff. Review:
		
		  a. Contract types webpages and information
		  b. Review wording of Open-ended contracts - not a passive process.
			a) Winter 25/26
			b) Spring 2026
			c) Spring 2026
				Intended Outcomes
				- Improve understanding of end of contract procedures for researchers.
				- Improve uptake of redeployment for Research Staff.
				- Simplify and clarify website language to improve accessibility.
				
				Measures of Success:
				- Improve the uptake of Open-ended contracts for those entitled to it (currently there are 200 research and academic staff with +4 years of contract potentially eligible for Open-ended contracts)
				- Improved data upon leaving (exit form and ECRI exit surveys)

2.4 Improve information for line	ECRI / HR / Research Office /	a) review FAQs for end of contracts for line mangers of researchers	a) Winter 25/26	Intended Outcomes:

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| managers and increase awareness of Open-ended contracts and good contractual practices. | Departmental managers
a) Concordat Lead/HR partner/ECRI Champions lead
b) Concordat Lead/HR partner /ECRI Champions lead
c) Concordat Lead/HR partner/ECRI Champions lead
d) Concordat Lead/Research Office lead / ECRI Champions lead | b) Create redeployment process FAQs for line mangers of researchers
c) Work with HR to review/signpost create FAQs of the Information for Managers on types of contract.
d) Create golden rules of contractual practices for staff employed on grants with Research Office and departmental research managers | b) Spring 2026
c) Spring 2026
d) Autumn 2026 | - Improve Understanding of HR processes for line manager especially at the end of contracts
- Improve understanding for continuous employment at the college over 4 years
- Ensure length of contract is of the longest possible duration for the contracted work on the grant/fellowship

Measures of Success:
- Reduce the number of rolling 1-year contracts
- Improve uptake of open-ended contracts with fixed funding (for staff employed for more than 4 years at Imperial) |
| 2.5 Monitor and increase engagement of Managers of Researchers with line management/team management/project management training activities | ECRI/POD
a) POD lead / Concordat Lead
b) POD lead / Concordat Lead
c) POD lead / ECRI Leadership leads | a) Review project management in the academic research context provision for academic staff
b) Review early / mid academic engagement with leadership training (Fellows-Reader) – include Calibre and Impact programmes
c) Understand and improve engagement of academics with coaching and mentoring (including reverse mentoring) | a) Autumn 2025
b) Winter 25/26
c) Winter 25/26 | Intended Outcomes:
- Increase engagement of academic staff with leadership training
- Improve project management training provision for academics

Measures of Success:
- Improve Academic job family engagement with leadership training from POD in the first year |

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				- Improve uptake of Project management in the academic research context for academic staff.
2.6 Increase visibility of Research Staff within departments	ECRI Reps, Champions and DoMs	Working with ECRI Reps and Champions, create best practice on showcasing who Research Staff are within departments via: - departmental induction processes / departmental webpages - Imperial profiles - Departmental awards - Departmental weekly webinars (with Research staff slots) - HoD meetings	Autumn 2026	Intended Outcomes: - Improve research Staff visibility within departments and externally Measures of Success: - Increased number of departments with Research staff tabs on their website - Increased number of Research staff with Imperial profiles created and updated - Increased nominations of research staff for departmental / Cross-university awards
2.7 Map representation of Researchers and managers of researchers at Departmental level	ECRI and RDC teams a) Concordat Lead/ECRI expressions of interest lead b) Concordat Lead/ ECRI expressions of interest lead c) Concordat Lead/ECRI awards lead d) Concordat Lead/ECRI Reps Lead/ECRI Champions lead	a) Pilot a form to seek departmental representatives for ECRI committees and expand to Section/Departmental/Faculty Committees. b) Create a toolkit - documentation on 'How to', and 'What's in it for me?' for both research staff and committee chairs, to clarify roles and responsibilities of Research Staff that sit on specific committees. Pilot toolkit with Reps before generalisation/upscaling. c) Research on representation of research staff at the section/departmental level - query why (or why not) Research Staff is represented and at what level and have them represented where	a) Spring 2025 b) Spring 2025 c) Summer 2025 d) Summer 2025	Intended Outcomes: - Best practice toolkit for recruitment of Research Staff onto committees - Best practice toolkit for research staff to participate in Committees Measures of Success: - Standardise representation of Research Staff at Section / Departmental level as appropriate. - Increased confidence of research staff to participate in Departmental meetings / committees

		Postgraduate students are (as appropriate). d) Investigate if research staff is represented at the Departmental staff meetings		

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(3) Professional and career development

1. Provide opportunities, structured support, encouragement and time for researchers to engage in a minimum of 10 days professional development pro rata per year, recognising that researchers will pursue careers across a wide range of employment sectors **- Business as usual with ongoing actions and monitoring.**

2. Provide training, structured support, and time for managers to engage in meaningful career development reviews with their researchers **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

3. Ensure that researchers have access to professional advice on career management, across a breadth of careers **- Business as usual with ongoing actions and monitoring.**

4. Provide researchers with opportunities, and time, to develop their research identity and broader leadership skills **- Business as usual with ongoing actions and monitoring.**

5. Recognise that moving between, and working across, employment sectors can bring benefits to research and researchers, and support opportunities for researchers to experience this **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

6. Monitor, and report on, the engagement of researchers and their managers with professional development activities, and researcher career development reviews **- Business as usual with new actions and monitoring ongoing.**

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Action points:

Action	Delivery partner(s) & Lead	Activities	Timeline	Intended Outcomes & Success Measures
3.1 Monitor and maintain awareness of 10 Development days for both researchers and line managers of researchers	ECRI a) ECRI induction lead / Concordat Lead b) Concordat Lead/ c) Concordat Lead / POD lead d) Concordat Lead/ECRI admin lead/POD lead	a) Update FAQs and wording around 10 Development days in fixed term contracts for Research job family (HR) b) Maintain (and improve) usage metrics for 10 development days resources c) Update support for ARC including more frequent ARC/10 Dev Days sessions for research Staff (align with ARC seasons) d) Explore the use of Inkpath to monitor personal 10 dev days use	a) Spring 2025 and yearly b) Yearly c) Summer 2025 d) Summer 2025	Intended Outcomes: - Monitor the uptake of the 10 development days by research staff and report on general uses on annual Concordat Report and REF PCE Measures of Success: - Increase in uptake of tools to monitor use of 10 development days (need baseline) - Increased feelings of support, increased feelings of wellbeing and improved staff survey results
3.2 Support Managers of Researchers to engage in meaningful career development conversations via probation and ARC conversations	ECRI / POD / HR partners a) Concordat Lead/HR lead/POD lead b) ECRI Career transitions lead	a) Increase awareness of Academics success guide by linking it to probation and ARC resources. b) Career tool conversations presentations.	a) Spring 2025 b) Spring 2025	Intended Outcomes: - Increased confidence for line managers for probation and ARC conversations around career progression / transitions Measures of Success: - Improved staff survey results around recognition and promotion, as well as support from line managers.
3.3 Provide new collaborative training sessions and improve interdisciplinary research support	ECRI, POD, Research Office, research funding managers in departments a) RE Project Lead	a) Pilot a funding workshop straddling PGR to Professor in order to receive (and provide) feedback on future fellowship and grant applications b) Create bespoke support for newly created Schools of	a) Spring / Summer 2025 b) Summer2025	Intended Outcomes: - Enable funding applicants at all levels to gain detailed feedback on grants. - Provide opportunities for less experienced researchers to participate in the funding

	b) ECRI and POD leadership leads	Convergence Science and other Collaborative networks across Imperial. a. For individuals researchers working at the cross-discipline boundaries b. For individuals that wish to collaborate more across disciplines.		application review process and more experienced researchers to mentor others through the reviewing process. - New collaborative training provision to support collaborative interdisciplinary research but also Researchers that work at the intersection of disciplines Measures of Success: - Pilot 1-2 workshops in 2025 - Increased cross-disciplinary and collaborative funding applications
3.4 Increase awareness of career moves between sectors	ECRI / Alumni / POD a) ECRI Career transitions lead/ POD b) ECRI Career transitions lead c) ECRI / Alumni and Advancement representative	a) Signposting ECRI/Imperial resources and provision around area/sector moves b) Career moves case studies c) Improve and build better links with Research Staff that leaves Imperial Research job family	a) Spring 2025 b) Spring 2026 c) Summer 2026	Intended Outcomes: - Improved awareness of career paths since start of employment at Imperial - Creation of a network of former research staff that is willing to participate in Imperial events - Increase Alumni and former research staff engagement in support of Imperial's strategy Measures of Success: - Increased engagement with website provision and resources with specific career support - Increase in former research staff links supporting employment, enterprise, 3rd sector engagement among others.