Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
Signatory Report 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

The report below relates to the three Concordat guiding principles (further details and detailed action plans can be found via our Implementing the Concordat web page):

**Concordat Principle 1 – Environment and Culture**
- Excellent research requires a supportive and inclusive research culture.

**Concordat Principle 2 – Employment**
- Researchers are recruited, employed and managed under conditions that recognise and value their contributions.

**Concordat Principle 3 – Professional and Career Development**
- Is integral to enabling researchers to develop their full potential.

1. **Strategic Objectives**

The HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) and our Concordat signatory reflects the University of Plymouth’s pledge to implement the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. HREiR and the Concordat support the delivery of our 2030 Strategy ‘A future of Excellence’ and our commitment to recruit and retain talented research staff, to recognise and value their contributions, to support their professional and career development, and to equip and empower them to succeed in their chosen careers. Key to sustaining HREiR is a Concordat Working Group led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise and comprising representatives from the Doctoral College, Human Resources, and Research Staff from our Faculties of Health; Science and Engineering; and Arts, Humanities and Business. Our Research Staff also have membership of: Senate; University Research and Innovation Committee; Doctoral College Board; REF Steering Group; and the University Researcher Forum. Their contributions reflect the voices of our community of over 220 research staff. Our Concordat Working Group oversees the activities of, and provides support for, our Research staff who operate across the University, within its Faculties and Schools, and engage with our Strategic Research Institutes.

This internal evaluation was conducted by the Concordat Working Group, assessing progress against the 2019 – 2021 action plan and planning commitments for 2021 – 2023. The evaluation was cognisant of the views of researchers represented through the:

- **University Researcher Forum and Faculty ECR Forums.** The Concordat Working Group works closely with the University Researcher Forum and Faculty ECR Fora on Concordat-related activities. Working Group members participate in Forum meetings, enabling ongoing dialogue between the groups. The Fora are well supported by our researchers and are a highly
effective mechanism linking our researchers, managers of researchers, and staff supporting researchers.

- **Concordat consultation.** The University Researcher Forum has held a series of Concordat consultation meetings and conducted a consultation survey of researchers focussing on their priorities, professional development, career opportunities and concerns.
- **CEDARS survey.** CEDARS 2020 and 2021 findings have been incorporated into our HREiR and Concordat action plans, enabling us to review and identify priority areas.

2. **Measures of Success - progress against our strategies**

Full details of our completed and ongoing actions for the reporting period, including SMART objectives, responsibilities and timelines can be found in our published [HREiR Action Plans 2019 – 2021 and 2021-2023](#). Here we present summaries of the main actions relating specially to the Concordat against the 2019 – 2021 and 2021-2023 action plans and how these have informed our [Concordat Action Plan 21-22](#).

2.1. **Participation in decision-making bodies** (**Concordat principles 1, 2, 3**). Research staff representatives participate in meetings of the University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC), REF 2021 Steering Group and Doctoral College Board (DCB) and Research Staff updates are standing agenda items on these committees. Both URIC and DCB report directly to Senate which also has formal representation from Research Staff. The Research Staff representatives work with the Concordat Working Group as a conduit for the University Researcher Forum and wider research staff community through sharing updates and developments, raising issues and opportunities, and consultation on the Concordat and other research staff matters.

2.2. **University Researcher Forum** (**Concordat principles 1, 2, 3**). The University Researcher Forum is open to all researchers, managers of researchers, and staff supporting researchers. The impacts of the University Researcher Forum events have enabled researchers to:

- Acquaint themselves with, and recognise the significance of, the aims and objectives of the Concordat and the commitment of the University as a signatory
- Participate in Concordat consultation including identifying priorities for researchers
- Enhance their own networks and receive support through university channels including industry collaboration, enterprise solutions, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, and funding.

2.3. **Faculty ECR Fora** (**Concordat principles 1, 2, 3**). Faculty-facing ECR Fora have been established for all three faculties (Health; Science and Engineering; and Arts, Humanities and Business) and are open to all researchers, managers of researchers, research leaders and staff supporting researchers. The Faculty ECR Fora provide a conduit for information, consultation, representation, career development and support for researchers. The impact of establishing ECR Fora for all three Faculties has led to further opportunities for research staff representatives through ‘**Faculty crossover representatives**. The Faculty crossover reps provide opportunities for researchers who are interested in developing their experience/research beyond their Faculty network.
2.4. **Participation in feedback (Concordat principles 1, 2, 3).** The Concordat provided the catalyst to consult with the Research Staff community for their input through the University Researcher Forum discussion sessions and via the consultation survey. Some main themes emerged from these exercises related to:

- Research management and leadership including workloads, recognition, value, and support
- Career development including career progression and job security
- ECR groups and opportunities for interdisciplinary networking
- Concerns relating to contracts and job security, funding, and institutional change

Following the Concordat consultation, the following events have been held:

- Policy Impact Workshops: Understanding policy and introduction to policy brief writing for ECRs (March and April 2021 – attended by 21 and 18 staff respectively)
- Health ECR Forum event: Simple steps towards developing your research career (July 21 – attended by 30 staff)
- Health ECR Forum event - International Research (September 2021 – attended by 22 staff)
- Arts, Humanities and Business ECR Forum event - Research Q&A (November 2021 – attended by 25 staff)
- Launch of Science and Engineering ECR Forum (December 2021 – attended by 45 staff)
- Health ECR Forum event: Conducting research in the NHS (February 2022 – attended by 21 staff)

2.5. **Carers and Parents network (Concordat principles 1, 2).** Launched in February 2021 and has 40 members from across the University [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/staff-parents-and-carers-network](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/staff-parents-and-carers-network). The network provides support, representation, and information including: balancing work demands against childcare or developmental needs across different age groups; hearing about local services and activities; Seeking information and support as new/expectant parents; connecting with other parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability; peer support among current and former carers; obtaining support and guidance as a new, short-term or long-term carer.

2.6. **Menopause support network (Concordat principles 1, 2).** Launched in October 2019 and has 81 members from across the University [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/gender-equality/menopause-support-network](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/gender-equality/menopause-support-network). The network provides a range of support including: a forum to talk about the menopause and share experiences; provide support and guidance where possible; invite guest speakers/clinicians; advise and give feedback on university policy development and associated practice; provide sessions for example: Menopause and nutrition masterclass and, Menopause awareness sessions.

2.7 **Career development workshops for researchers (Concordat principle 3).** The Researcher Development Programme has introduced a series of career development workshops (2020-22) for Research Staff and PGRs focusing on ‘How to transition well out of academia’. The
Faculty of Health ECR Forum and Researcher Development Programme delivered a careers event in July 2021 entitled ‘Simple steps towards developing your research career’.

2.8. **Impact of COVID (Concordat principles 1, 2, 3)**. The most notable impacts of COVID as part of this report included:

- Athena SWAN. The final remaining School submissions were delayed with a revised submission by November 2021.
- Fixed Term Contract (FTC) review was delayed and has been incorporated in the HREiR Action plan 2021-2023.

3. **Concordat Implementation plan and actions for the future**

Full details of our forward action plans, including SMART objectives, responsibilities and timelines can be found in our published [HREIR Action Plan 2021-2023](#). Here we present summaries of some of the main actions that have been delivered relating specially to the Concordat over the last 12 months and timelines for key future priorities over the next 12 months.

3.1. **ECR web pages (Concordat principles 1, 2, 3)**. Develop and regularly refresh the ECR web pages for Concordat sections ‘environment and culture’, ‘employment’ and ‘professional and career development’, and Faculty ECR Forum sections including guidance and resources for researchers and managers (see: [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/early-career-research](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/early-career-research)).

**Success measure**: staff awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat, as measured by 2023 CEDARS survey, to increase by 10% over 2021 (60.5%).

3.2. **Employment policies and practices (Concordat principles 1, 2, 3)**. Review and update published documentation to ensure considerations of researchers are included, update the ECR web pages and communicate the outcome of this review to all researchers and managers by 30 April 2022.

**Success measures**: staff confidence in ability to manage requests for flexible working appropriately (79.27% CEDARS 2021). Respond to issues relating to health and wellbeing (80.49% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of discrimination (75.34% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of bullying and harassment (70.73% CEDARS 2021). Reporting incidents of research misconduct (61.91% CEDARS 2021). As measured by 2023 CEDARS survey, all to increase by 5% over 2021 metrics.

3.3. **Training and support for managers of researchers (Concordat principles 1, 2, 3)**. Design and pilot Managers of Researchers workshop for up to 10 managers for feedback and review prior to roll-out by 30 June 2022. Review and update ‘Management Basics’ training package and updates to online modules and re-launched as part of the Managers of Researchers pilot workshop by 30 June 2022.

**Success measures**: Managers of researchers having confidence to: support their researchers in working towards their career aspirations (85.4% CEDARS 2021); and manage
appraisal/review processes effectively (76.8% CEDARS 2021. As measured by 2023 CEDARS survey, to increase by 3% and 5% respectively over 2021 metrics.

3.4. University Researcher Forum and Faculty ECR Fora (Concordat principles 1, 2, 3). Deliver a University Researcher Forum event on the Government’s R&D People and Culture strategy (July 2021) to researchers and managers by 31 October 2022. Include the Concordat in communications for researchers, managers, and other Concordat beneficiaries by 30 April 2022.

*Success measures:* staff confidence in ability to respond to issues relating to health and wellbeing (80.49% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of discrimination (75.34% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of bullying and harassment (70.73% CEDARS 2021). Reporting incidents of research misconduct (61.91% CEDARS 2021). As measured by 2023 CEDARS survey, all to increase by 5% over the 2021 metrics. Staff awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat, as measured by 2023 CEDARS survey, to increase by 10% over the 2021 metrics (60.5%).

3.5. Ethics and integrity (Concordat principle 1). Review how Faculty and University REICs engage with researchers and contribute to the delivery of the Concordat Inclusion as a standing item for Faculty and University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee’s (UREIC) actioned in December 2021. R&I to deliver research integrity training sessions from 2021-2023 for research staff and PGRs.

*Success measures:* target of over 50% staff completing training (40.7% in 2021) and 60% staff awareness of the Research Integrity Concordat (50% in 2021) by July 2023 as measured by 2023 CEDARS survey.

3.6. Fixed-term contracts (Concordat principle 2). HR to produce analysis of staff data to be reported to Faculties by 30 April 2022.

*Success measure:* HR and Faculties to review the use of FTCs including identifying those eligible to be transferred to an open-ended contract (over 4 year’s service and no justifiable objective to remain fixed term) by 31 July 2023.

3.7. Professional development (Concordat principles 2, 3). HR to complete review of current policies to ensure 10 days professional development pro rata is included and HR/ECR web pages are updated by 30 April 2022. Develop processes for recording and reporting of professional development through iTRENT including professional development undertaken through the University, ad hoc and externally that can be recorded by researchers and managers by 31 July 2022.

*Success measures:* staff accessing 3 or more days training and development in the past 12 months (50.00% CEDARS 2021), and usefulness of PDR (57.03% CEDARS 2021). As measured by 2023 CEDARS survey, to increase by 5% over 2021 metrics.

3.8. Career management (Concordat principle 3). Researcher Development Programme 2021-2023 to deliver careers sessions for research staff including: How to transition out of academia well; Career management portfolios; Interview workshop by 30 June 2022. Development and refresh of ECR web pages for Concordat sections ‘professional and career
development’ and ‘employment’, and Faculty ECR Forum sections including career management resources and career pathways for researchers by 30 June 2022. Provide guidance for research managers, using materials generated for the Managers of Researchers’ workshop including career development and career conversations both within and outside of the annual PDR process by 30 June 2022.

Success measure: awareness of support the University provides for professional and career development (50.77% CEDARS 2021) to increase by 10% as measured by 2023 CEDARS survey.

Concordat Working Group 31 March 2022