

## **Academy of Medical Sciences Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan 2024**

### **Introduction**

The Academy of Medical Sciences is pleased to have become a signatory to the Researcher Development Concordat in October 2023. The Academy is a member of the Researcher Development Concordat Strategy Group and has been a supporter of the concordat since 2008. To affirm our support to the principles of the concordat we set out here a narrative outlining both our efforts to implement our obligations as a funder signatory to the concordat and how this complements the work of the Academy to influence change within the wider research landscape. This is followed by an action plan table setting out our detailed plans for implementation in the coming year.

### **Alignment with Academy strategy and mission**

The Academy's mission is to help create an open and progressive research sector to improve the health of people everywhere. We recognise that supporting the careers of researchers is key to succeeding in our mission, which is underpinned by our [Strategy 2022-2032](#). One of our key strategic priorities is to support the next generation of researchers to reach their full potential, which we will achieve by:

- Proactively broadening the range of people and disciplines engaged in biomedical and health research and supporting and recognising their talents in different ways.
- Providing innovative career funding and support that builds the capacity of teams and individuals.
- Ensuring biomedical and health research has a clear, effective and attractive career pathway.

Our efforts to fulfil our priorities have significant synergy with the aims of the concordat, and we provide below some examples where the Academy is acting to improve research careers.

The Academy is a leader in influencing policy, with our careers policy function driving strategic stakeholder engagement to galvanise action on research career pathways. Our policy approach serves as a scoping mechanism to identify challenges requiring joint stakeholder attention or escalating to government, along with funding support mechanisms where appropriate. We seek to monitor the real-life impact of any issues having a negative impact on researchers, and directly include their voices in our policy activities as much as possible.

The Academy recognises that the UK's status as a medical research world leader is underpinned by its workforce. As such, our policy work seeks to advance progress across a range of critical areas for biomedical and health research careers. Among these priorities are the following: affordable visa costs, positive work cultures, fair remuneration, workplace commitment to EDI principles, cross-sector mobility, and protected time for research within the NHS. In 2023 we published the "[Future-proofing UK Health Research: a people-centred, coordinated approach](#)" report, an evidence-based review of the long-term sustainability of the UK health research system. It details key threats to UK health research and the steps needed to protect it. A key finding of the report called on the sector to "place people at the heart of the UK health research

system” by removing barriers to pursuing research careers to allow those with broad expertise to fully explore their potential and deliver innovations. Since the report’s publication, we have seen elements of its messaging reflected in UK government documentation on NHS research and clinical academics. Recommendations have been echoed by the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB). Also, the Academy has collaborated directly with the Government’s Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) to implement a Research and Innovation (R&I) Workforce Survey drawing from the Future-proofing report’s work.

Our Future-proofing report also called on the sector to “ensure talented people can develop careers that span sectors to address a lack of movement of researchers between roles in public, private and charitable research sectors”. The Academy is keen to myth bust that academic careers are the most desirable or where all innovation happens. This aligns with the concordat principle that asks funders to “Acknowledge that a large proportion of the researchers they fund will move on to careers beyond academia and consider how they can encourage and support this within their remit”. In response to this need to better support research to work across and between sectors the Academy launched a pioneering [Cross-Sector programme](#) in 2023, which brings together innovators and researchers from different fields to promote health innovation. Through this programme we are establishing networking hubs across the UK to connect researchers and promote opportunities that support cross sector working. We also launched [Cross-Sector Experience Awards](#) which provide funding to support individuals who want to work in a different sector for a period of three to twelve months, and made our first awards in Spring 2024.

### **Clinical Academic careers**

The Academy is actively convening stakeholder action and working to address policy issues in relation to support for clinical academics (health professionals engaged in research activities). Numbers of clinical academics in the UK have been in decline, and there are multiple threats to the sustainability and attractiveness of the career pathway. These include pay parity, insufficient protected time for research, low numbers of post-PhD roles, and reduced exposure to research at undergraduate level.

In line with the concordat, we endeavour to work alongside institutions to develop policies and frameworks which are favourable to sustainable employment arrangements, and secure career pathways (e.g. strengthening [the Follett principles](#) on joint working across NHS-academia).

We provide direct support for clinical academics through our grants and career development activities. A [recent evaluation, published in the BMJ](#), found that our Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers and mentoring support add significant value to clinical academic trainees and that success in applying for an Academy Starter Grant is associated with progression to a clinical academic role.

Another element of our support for clinical academics is the [Clinical Academics in Training Annual Conference \(CATAC\)](#). CATAC is a unique cross-disciplinary event designed to bring trainee clinical academics from a wide range of clinical disciplines and specialties together to present their work, and network with one another and with senior researchers. This is a valuable opportunity for skills development, where researchers benefit from practising their face-to-face presentation and networking skills and can raise their profile within the community.

The Academy contributes to multi-stakeholder fora which focus on clinical academic careers. These include the [Clinical Academic Training Forum \(CATF\)](#) and the [UK Clinical Research Collaboration \(UKCRC\)](#), to which the Academy provides secretariat support. In order to address equality of opportunity, we are part of an EDI sub-group within the CATF network. This group focuses on fomenting positive and inclusive clinical research cultures by means of case study and data collection, sharing best practice (including within panel assessment criteria) and composing reports.

### **Action plan and future plans**

The following table sets out our action plan for upholding our signatory commitments under the concordat. It includes current activities which we will continue and our plans for additional initiatives over the next year, which will further embed the commitments of the concordat into our practices. We commit to reviewing this action plan annually.

AMS action plan October 2024

Concordat principle and funder commitments	Current and continuing activities	New activities to implement in 2024-25	Responsible	Timeline
<b>1. Environment and culture</b>				
<b>1.1 Include requirements which promote equitable, inclusive and positive research cultures and environments, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.</b>	Continue implementation of our Equity, diversity and inclusion <a href="#">Strategy</a> 2023-2026, specifically Goal 2: Support a biomedical and health research culture that promotes and values equity, diversity and inclusion.		Careers team	Ongoing
	We are a supporter of the Concordat to support research integrity and ask grant applicants and their host institutions to endorse the principles in our terms and conditions.		Grants team	Ongoing
	Compliance with our safeguarding and bullying and harassment policies is a condition of grant funding.		Grants team	Ongoing
	Engage with research culture initiatives, e.g. REF consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing to support DSIT on the approach to its R&amp;I Workforce Survey.</li> <li>Continuing engagement with the funding bodies' REF team, including where necessary acting as a sounding board and convener of other relevant organisations as the changes ahead of REF2029 progress.</li> <li>Engagement with Research England's Executive Chair via the Academy's 'Future-proofing</li> </ul>	Careers Policy team	Ongoing

		<p>UK Health Research' symposium and other events/meetings, to offer continued support for actions that improve research culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure our messaging recognises science careers outside academia as of equal value and celebrates the contribution and choices of those researchers.</li> </ul>		
	Consider implementing narrative CVs in application forms, by reviewing existing evidence and suitability for our funding schemes.		Grants team	On-going
		Evaluate diversity of grant applicants and awardees as part of scheme quinquennial evaluations.	Grants Assurance team	Reviews of Springboard and Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers schemes due autumn 2024
<b>1.2 Consider how funding opportunities and policies can facilitate different patterns and ways of working, and promote the wellbeing and mental health of researchers.</b>	<p>Flexible working and careers breaks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants can tell us about time spent away from research or flexible working patterns in their application forms, which is taken into consideration by our funding panels.</li> <li>• Flexible working arrangements allowed for grantees on the majority of our grant schemes</li> </ul>		Grants team	Ongoing
	We coordinated the cross-funder covid impact statement effort. We have recently reviewed the impact of this and will		Careers Policy and Grants teams	Ongoing

	continue to ask this question in our applications while it remains useful.			
	Implementing recommendations of the <a href="#">Future-proofing UK Health Research: a people-centred, coordinated approach</a> report into our funding practices and advocating for change within the sector	The Academy is planning a 'Future-proofing UK Health Research' symposium event to mark the passing of one-year-on from the report's publication and to further coordinate action on recommendations. The report will continue to be shared with key audiences and feed into our strategic policy planning.	Careers Policy team	Ongoing
<b>1.3 Ensure that funding call requirements and selection processes offer equality of opportunity between different groups of researchers, recognise personal contexts, and promote positive research cultures and working conditions.</b>	EDI data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed and implemented new EDI data collection forms to collect data from grant applicants, career development programmes and event participants. Ensuring consistent data collection across our systems.</li> <li>Consolidated and anonymised diversity data presented to panels.</li> </ul>		Grants and Programmes teams	Ongoing
		Recent diversity data for grant schemes to be analysed and presented as part of the Academy's Diversity report 2024	EDI manager	Autumn 2024
		Implement a new EDI data collection tool on our grant system to allow diversity data to be captured for panel members and reviewers.	Grants team	December 2024
	Schemes and career development opportunities are advertised widely to a range of groups and platforms. Continue to seek additional advertising routes.		Careers team and Communications team	Ongoing

	Panel members are given guidance on unconscious bias and decision making in groups during their induction and at each panel meeting.		Grants team	Ongoing
	We are a signatory of the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and instruct our panels and reviewers to assess applications and research impact in line with its principles.		Grants team	Ongoing
	<a href="#">SUSTAIN</a> programme has adopted a new EDI process to increase presence of participants from underrepresented categories.	Monitor the success of this adaptation and adapt further as required	Programmes team	Ongoing
		EDI review of grant application and assessment processes planned. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing our processes to identify areas to improve equity and remove barriers to underrepresented groups</li> <li>• Considering where positive action may be appropriate to overcome disadvantage</li> <li>• The use of accessible and inclusive language on our website and in application forms</li> </ul>	Grants team and EDI manager	To commence end 2024 or early 2025
<b>2. Employment</b>				
<b>2.1 Include requirements which support the improvement of working conditions for researchers, in</b>	Eligibility and assessment criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of our grant schemes require applicants to have a permanent position to be eligible (such as AMS Professorships).</li> <li>• The suitability of the research environment at the host institution is</li> </ul>		Grants team	Ongoing

<b>relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.</b>	an assessment criterion on certain schemes, for example the Springboard scheme “availability of appropriate support”.			
	Grants are linked to the award holder and can be transferred to a new eligible institution, promoting career mobility.		Grants team	Ongoing
		We are reviewing our amendment request process and aim to simplify and speed up the approval of requests from awardees for no-cost extensions due to parental or sick leave.	Grants team	Autumn/winter 2024
<b>2.2 Review the impact of relevant funding call requirements on researchers’ employment, particularly in relation to career progression and lack of job security.</b>	We regularly review the impact of our funding schemes on awardees’ career progression and development as part of our monitoring and evaluation work. Schemes are independently evaluated approximately every 5 years.	Independent evaluations of Springboard and Starter Grant for Clinical Lecturers schemes due in autumn 2024.	Grants Assurance team	Ongoing
<b>2.3 Support institutions to develop policies and frameworks to promote sustainable employment arrangements and enhance job security, and provide</b>	Supporting clinical academic careers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are a signatory to the <a href="#">UK clinical academic training in medicine and dentistry: principles and obligations</a>. It forms part of our policies for host institutions for grant schemes open to clinical academics.</li> <li>We have convened an Advisory Group on Clinical Academic Training to inform our strategy. Attended by clinical academics along the career pathway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Academy will continue to convene, engage and partner with stakeholders to address declining clinical academic numbers.</li> <li>The Advisory Group will hold further meetings, and our Vice President (Clinical) will discuss the challenges with high-level contacts.</li> </ul>	Careers Policy and Communication teams	Ongoing



<b>opportunities for career progression.</b>	<p>who recount on-the-ground experiences and recurrent issues including pay levels, diversity, work-life balance and access to funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with partners to strengthen <a href="#">the Follett principles</a> on joint working across NHS-academia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Academy will support a Task &amp; Finish group on Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (NMAHP) research pathways, and begin leading the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) secretariat.</li> <li>The Academy will begin to engage clinically qualified researchers working in Industry to bring their voice to the table.</li> <li>Additionally, communication materials will be produced to highlight and evidence the value of clinical academics to patients, health services and UK economy.</li> </ul>		
<b>2.4 Consider the balance of their relevant funding streams in providing access to research funding and its impact at all career levels.</b>	Our funding opportunities specifically target key career stages for emerging research leaders where there is a gap in the wider landscape, e.g. Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers allow research-active Clinical Lecturers to gather data to strengthen their bids for longer-term fellowships and funding.		Grants team	Ongoing
<b>3. Professional and career development</b>				
<b>3.1 Incorporate specific professional development</b>	Currently we offer protected time and budget for mandated training, inductions and career development sessions to our grantholders.		Grants team	Ongoing

<b>requirements in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies. This should include researchers' engagement in a minimum of 10 days' professional development pro rata per year, and evidence of effective career development planning</b>	<p>The SUSTAIN, FLIER and mentoring programmes, as well as the PILLAR online hub, offer career development support to the Academy's researcher community.</p>		Programmes team	Ongoing
	<p>The concordat now forms part of our grant conditions to awardees and their host institutions, so they are expected to provide a minimum of 10 days' professional development pro rata per year, and evidence of effective career development planning.</p>		Grants team	Ongoing
<b>3.2 Embed the Concordat Principles and researcher development into research assessment strategies and processes.</b>	<p>Access to our mentoring programme is offered to all applicants to our Springboard and Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers schemes regardless of the outcome of the grant application.</p>		Grants team	Ongoing
	<p>Applicants are asked how receiving the grant would contribute to their career development and progression and this is considered by selection panels as part of the assessment process.</p>		Grants team	Ongoing
		<p>We will update our application forms to specifically ask sponsors to acknowledge the requirement to allow 10 days' professional development pro rata per year, and evidence of effective career development planning at the point</p>	Grants team	Autumn/Winter 2024

		of application so this commitment can be scrutinised during the selection process. We will also consider the best way to monitor compliance post-award. We will take care that career plans are holistic and not narrowly focussed on academia.		
<b>3.3 Acknowledge that a large proportion of the researchers they fund will move on to careers beyond academia, and consider how they can encourage and support this within their remit.</b>	We have launched a <a href="#">Cross Sector Programme</a> with regional networking hubs and <a href="#">Cross-sector Experience Awards</a> to encourage and support the movement of researchers between sectors.		Careers team	Ongoing
	Our online community portals for grant and programme participants, <a href="#">PILLAR</a> and <a href="#">HIVE</a> , bring our research community together and allow shared learning across different disciplines and sectors.		Careers team	Ongoing
		Produce and promote case studies showcasing diverse career paths.	Careers team and Communications team	Ongoing