

Annual report for the concordat to support the career development of researchers

Reporting period

October 2024 – September 2025

Date approved by governing body

13 November 2025

**Contact for questions/concerns on
researcher career development**

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1 Please provide a statement describing your organisation's funding / regulatory status, and approach to supporting and embedding positive and inclusive research environments.

The Academy of Medical Sciences is the independent, expert voice of biomedical and health research in the UK. Our Fellowship comprises the most influential scientists in the UK and worldwide, drawn from the NHS, academia, industry, and public service. Our mission is to improve the health of people everywhere by creating an open and progressive research sector. We do this by working with patients and the public to influence policy and biomedical practice, strengthening UK biomedical and health research, supporting the next generation of researchers through funding and career development opportunities, and working with partners globally.

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. The Academy is acting to improve research careers through our [policy work](#) and by providing funding and career development opportunities to researchers through our portfolio of [grant schemes and programmes](#).

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 negative impact of any issues on researchers, and directly include their voices in our policy activities as much as possible.

The Academy works in partnership with other research funders to offer grants for biomedical and health researchers at key career stages. Our schemes support clinical academics, those working in biomedical research, enable international networking and collaboration, and offer opportunities for cross-sector working. This is complemented by our career development opportunities, which include mentoring, leadership development programmes, and a range of regional events.

Our work is guided by the Academy's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023–2026, which includes a specific goal to 'support a biomedical and health research culture that promotes and values equity, diversity and inclusion'. We embed EDI within our events, policy advice, grant awards and

programmes, ensuring they are accessible and available to all.

The Academy is governed by a Council of Fellows who serve as trustees and give strategic advice. To broaden the diversity of voices on the Academy's governing body, the Academy implemented a scheme in 2020 for emerging research leader observers to sit on the Council. Their purpose is to provide valuable perspective and representation from our community of researchers. Alumni from our careers programmes can apply to be an observer through a transparent and competitive process.

2 Provide a short summary of the organisation's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) together with your measures for evaluating progress and success.

One of the Academy's [strategic](#) priorities is to support the next generation of researchers. Our Researcher Development Concordat [action plan](#), published in December 2024, outlines how we deliver on our commitments as a signatory. Below is a summary aligned with each Concordat pillar.

Environment and culture

We set clear expectations for grant recipients and their host organisations through our terms and conditions, including adherence to safeguarding and anti-bullying policies. We also expect compliance with sector-wide standards such as the Declaration on Research Assessment and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Some funding schemes require host institutions to guarantee protected research time for applicants. Grant panels assess the research environment and support offered by institutions as part of the selection process.

We encourage flexible career paths and working patterns. Applicants can disclose flexible working arrangements and career breaks, which are taken into consideration by our grant panels. Flexible working arrangements are allowed for grantees on the majority of our grant schemes. This is completed by our policy engagement with sector-wide research culture initiatives.

To support EDI, we provide guidance to grant panels and collect EDI data to monitor applicant and awardee diversity.

Employment

We encourage job security by requiring applicants to have confirmed contracts for the duration of their award on certain schemes, for example in our AMS Professorship and Springboard scheme. We also support mobility, allowing award holders to transfer their grants to new eligible institutions.

We encourage sustainable research careers by targeting key career stages. For example, our Springboard and Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers schemes help early career researchers to develop ideas, generate pilot data, and build teams, putting them in a stronger position to secure longer-term funding.

Through policy work, we engage stakeholders to improve the research environment and career pathways. This includes clinical academic careers. We are a signatory to the UK clinical academic training in medicine and dentistry: principles and obligations. It forms part of our policies for host institutions for grant schemes open to clinical academics. We work with partners to strengthen joint working across the NHS and academia. We convene an Advisory Group on Clinical Academic Training. This group provides insights into challenges such as pay levels, diversity, work-life balance and access

to funding. We also responded to government consultations on the 10 Year Health Plan for England and the industrial strategy with positions on clinical research workforce training and mobility.

Professional development of researchers

The Concordat forms part of our grant conditions, requiring host institutions to provide at least 10 days' professional development per year and support effective career development planning.

Beyond funding, we offer career development opportunities to our awardees and the wider researcher community. These include mentoring, the SUSTAIN programme for women researchers, the FLIER leadership programme for emerging life sciences leaders, and various career development events.

We champion the movement of researchers between academia and other sectors, and view movement between academia and industry as vital to strengthening health research and economic growth. We have launched a cross-sector programme with regional networking hubs and Cross-Sector Experience Awards to allow individuals to work in a different sector. Our online community platforms, PILLAR and HIVE, bring our research community together and allow shared learning across disciplines. Further, we are increasing representation from industry in our Fellowship to better reflect the breadth of career pathways within biomedical science, and to complement our cross-sector work.

Evaluating progress

We regularly assess the impact of our funding on researchers' career progression and development as part of our monitoring and evaluation work. Schemes are independently evaluated approximately every five years.

3

Summary of actions taken (including changes to relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting and policies in relation to host organisations and/or grant applicants), and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars.

Environment and culture

Last year, we published our [diversity report for 2020–2024](#); this included analysis of our grants' and programmes' participants and made several recommendations that we will be exploring how to implement. We have implemented one of the recommendations in our FLIER programme by taking steps during the shortlisting process to ensure disabled, LGBTQ+ and/or Black applicants are given an equitable opportunity for selection onto this programme. In addition, we have also improved the EDI data collection on Flexi-Grant, the grant management system used by the Academy. This system has been able to match the Academy's 'Gold Standard' EDI data collection form.

The Academy has fed into the consultations on the Research Excellence Framework, including discussions on people, culture and environment and the recognition of the clinical academic community. In addition, the Academy held a symposium, in November 2024, to reflect on progress made following the Academy's report on [future-proofing UK health research](#). The importance of strategic partnerships and cross-sector collaboration were identified as key themes and an [update report](#) was published in May 2025.

The Academy is a signatory of a cross-funder statement, in which we commit to ensuring that the impacts of COVID-19 are taken fairly into consideration by our panels and committees when assessing an individual applicant's record of outputs, research achievements, and career progression. The Academy's grants processes continue to capture the impact of COVID-19 at both the application and output reporting phases of the grant life cycle as medical, biomedical and all health-related subjects were particularly impacted by COVID-19.

Employment

Complementing our funding activities, the Academy is working to address policy issues in relation to support for research careers, through coordinating the development and implementation of policy recommendations across key stakeholders. Over the past year, the Academy has:

- supported development and implementation of [Office for Strategic Co-ordination of Health Research \(OSCHR\) reports on the decline of UK clinical academics](#)
- convened a working group of funders to address funder-facing deliverables of the OSCHR reports, which included activities on developing a [national clinical research career pathway](#)
- convened a Clinical Academic Summit to share national and regional examples of innovative models for creating clinical academic posts; over 40 organisations and prominent figures signed a [statement of ambition and intent for creating new clinical academic posts](#)

We recently published external evaluations of two of our funding schemes, which have reported the pivotal role they play in developing research leaders. The [evaluation](#) of the Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers scheme reported the significant impact of these awards on recipients' career trajectories. The [evaluation](#) of the Springboard scheme highlighted the unique role this scheme plays in supporting recipients to establish their independent research groups.

Professional development of researchers

We have implemented the requirement for award holders and host institutions to adhere to the principles and obligations set out by the Concordat, and included this in our application forms and award conditions. We now ask for confirmation that researchers receiving or employed on our awards have 10 days' professional development, pro rata per year, and effective career development planning.

In addition, we have a number of programmes to support researchers (including our awardees) with career development. These include our SUSTAIN, FLIER, International Workshops and Mentoring Programmes, tailored to participants' specific career needs. We also run online career development events, open to all biomedical and health early career researchers. Specifically:

- In 2025, we have matched 136 mentees to date. We have hosted six mentoring masterclasses for mentors and mentees, and one mentoring masterclass for new Fellows/mentors.
- We continue to provide support to all three cohorts of FLIER alumni through activities such as our alumni conference and virtual thought-leadership sessions. We will offer support to a fourth cohort from March 2026.

4

Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result.

Following the evaluation of schemes mentioned and other reviews of processes we will be reviewing how we monitor compliance with concordats and other policies. We will also be streamlining our amendment process to ensure timely responses to requests from awardees.

We have used data from various evaluations to help inform our action plan for the following year. Some of these are noted below.

Data from evaluations and the diversity report will inform an EDI review of our grant application and assessment processes. The diversity report made a number of recommendations that we will address as part of this work.

To further support research careers through our policy activities, we will be revisiting the 2016 working group report on '[Improving recognition of team science contributions in biomedical research careers](#)'. The Academy will revisit this work for the 10th anniversary of the report, to examine and refresh what Team Science should look like in the current context. This is timely in light of the [Life Sciences Sector Plan](#), which notes how the sector relies on an 'increasingly interdisciplinary workforce'.

Our SUSTAIN – women in research leadership programme – has celebrated its 10th anniversary and has now supported 253 women. Based on our 2022 evaluation recommendations that we should engage our alumni more in our work and to open the role of mentors to non-Fellows, our 12th cohort of participants will have the option to request a SUSTAIN alumna as a mentor in addition to being paired with an Academy Fellow. We will monitor the impact of this to see whether it improves programme outcomes.

5

Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period.

The following sets out our key objectives for delivering 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.

Within our funding activities, we will:

- complete an EDI review of our grant applications and processes to ensure that our opportunities are open to as wide a group as possible and there is equitable access for everyone
- continued review of processes to ensure compliance and best practice; part of this will be reviewing our policies and procedures at regular intervals and when new best practice is available

We will continue to support research careers through our programmes:

- All of the Academy's programmes, as well as the PILLAR online hub, offer career development support to the Academy's researcher community. This will be tailored to their needs and continually reviewed for impact.
- To increase the presence of participants from underrepresented categories in our programmes, we will consider where opportunities are advertised, and selection processes and factors that might reduce inclusion or perceptions of inclusion.

Complementing our funding activities, we will continue to support research careers through our policy activities, working with stakeholders from across the sector to inform and influence policy, support existing policy recommendations and share examples of best practice. This will include:

- We will continue to support the implementation of the recommendations from the Academy's report: [Future-proofing UK Health Research: a people-centred, coordinated approach](#).
- We will continue to support and coordinate with the sector to support the careers of [clinical academics](#) through our policy activities, including influencing, advocacy, supporting OSCHR report deliverables and showcasing examples of best practice.
- We will revisit the Academy's [Team Science report](#) for its 10th anniversary, reflecting changes in the current context for UK researchers, including how the sector relies on an 'increasingly interdisciplinary workforce'. We are also keen to support the 10 Year Health Plan and Life Sector Plan (following publication), which includes strands around the clinical research workforce.

6 Please provide a brief statement describing your organisation's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body or equivalent authority.

Progress against our action plan was checked and the report written by members of the Academy's RDC working group, which comprises representatives from the Grants, Programmes, and Careers Policy teams in our Biomedical Grants and Policy department. It was reviewed by relevant Heads of Department and approved by the Director of Biomedical Grants and Policy, as well as the Vice-President Non-clinical, who is the Trustee nominated as champion for the RDC. It was then taken to the Honorary Officers meeting, a sub-group of our Council (equivalent to the governing body), for sign off before submission and publication.

Signature on behalf of governing body / equivalent authority:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Naismith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor James Naismith **FRS FRSE FMedSci**






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