Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Funder Action Plan

March 2021

The Concordat and action plan

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers ('the Concordat') is an agreement between four key stakeholder groups (funders, institutions, researchers, and managers of researchers) aimed at improving support for researchers and research careers in higher education in the UK. The Concordat sets out a number of obligations, for each of the four stakeholder groups, which must be upheld in order for its aims to be realised. The Dunhill Medical Trust became a signatory of the Concordat on 11th March 2020, and as such is now committed to upholding those responsibilities targeted at the Funder stakeholder group. One such responsibility, for all signatories, is to publish an action plan within 12 months of signing up to the Concordat.

This action plan is based on the defining principles of the Concordat: environment and culture, employment, and professional and career development. For each of the outlined Funder commitments, it describes the current situation, including policies the Trust already has in place, as well as the changes the Trust intends to make. The action plan will be updated as appropriate and published.

Our vision

The Trust is committed to promoting a dynamic, diverse, and inclusive research system. There is, however, always more work to be done as illustrated in this action plan.

As a funder, the Trust expects organisations affiliated with its awardees to support their researchers and hold similar values. For the values of the Concordat to be successfully implemented, collaboration between the four stakeholder groups is required.

Current landscape

COVID-19 has caused numerous challenges for the research community and amplified existing ones. Now, more than ever, it is vital that collaborative action is taken to support researchers. The Trust is closely following the impact of the pandemic on its awardees as well as the broader research system.

Reviewing actions

An initial review will take place in February 2022 to assess the progress towards these actions and at least annually thereafter.

1.	Environment and Culture				
Commitments	**Current initiatives to continue**	**New actions**	**Deadline**	**Lead**	**Result**
i) Include requirements which promote equitable, inclusive, and positive research cultures and environments, in relevant funding calls, terms and conditions, grant reporting, and policies.	*Funding calls*				
	The Trust expects host organisations for its funded researchers to be aligned with these principles. The Trust asks applicants to give details about their research environment and institutional infrastructure and capacity as well as relevant accreditations (e.g., Athena Swan recognition).		Monitor (ongoing)		
	The Trust sets out expectations for managers of researchers and host organisations when advertising new calls.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Include questions in application forms focusing on how host organisations approach equity, diversity, and inclusion.	April 2021	DMT Research team	
	Terms and conditions				
	The Trust has a research fraud and misconduct item in its research grant terms and conditions ensuring that research is conducted according to best practice and meeting the standards of rigour and integrity set out in the Concordat.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Include the AMRC Anti-bullying & harassment guidelines explicitly in the research grant terms and conditions as part of all new funding call documents.	February 2022	Head of Research Policy & Awards	
		Review and revise the research grant terms and conditions so that breaches and misconduct could prevent host institutions (or awardees) from applying for grants in the future.	February 2022	Head of Research Policy & Awards	
	Grant reporting				
		Revise the questions in the periodic Progress Reports to increase the focus on the research environment asking PIs about their contribution to promoting an equitable, inclusive, and positive research culture.	February 2022	DMT Research team	

		Introduce a reporting mechanism which requires all researchers employed on the grant to report back independently on their experience of the research culture and whether the plans for support of early career researchers set out in the application were carried out.	February 2022	DMT Research team	
		Introduce 'exit interviews' for researchers who leave the project prior to the grant end date.	February 2022	DMT Research team	
		Policies			
	The Trust has an Equality and diversity policy, which aims to ensure that there is no bias in its systems, processes, behaviours and culture and to recognise, learn and work with our partners to create inclusive communities.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Ensure that prior to any substantial research-related change being made (policy, event or funding activity) an equality impact assessment is completed using or adapting the UKRI template.	April 2021	All DMT Staff	
		Agree and publish a statement on Modern Slavery.	June 2021	Head of Research Policy & Awards	
ii) Consider how funding opportunities and policies can accommodate different patterns and ways of working and promote the wellbeing and mental health of researchers.		Funding opportunities			
	The Trust offers the option to complete fellowships on a part time basis (rather than simply three years, full time) which allows individuals who have other responsibilities to apply.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Policies			
	The Trust is supportive of those taking maternity/ paternity leave or time out for caring responsibilities and expects the institution the researcher is affiliated with to financially support them during this time.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Review the Terms and Conditions of research grants and include an item stating that the Trust is supportive of researchers taking compassionate leave or breaks due to ill health.	February 2022	Head of Research Policy & Awards	

iii) 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.	Funding call requirements				
	The Trust's fellowship grants are open to different groups of researchers and recognises personal contexts.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Ensure that the eligibility and assessment criteria for calls are clear and provide suitable opportunities across the career experience and disciplinary range.	April 2021	DMT Research team	
		Host webinars to support applicants in preparation of applications. Record them and make them available online to ensure that they are accessible to a wide audience.	May 2021	DMT Research team	
	Funding call selection processes				
	As part of the selection process, professionals applying for training fellowships are compared to only those of the same broad professional group.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Develop a strategy to start gathering and tracking data in support of strengthening diversity.	February 2022	DMT Research team	
		Continue efforts to broaden the pool of reviewers with respect to career-stage and protected characteristics.	October 2021	DMT Research team	
		Give due consideration, where feasible, to family and caring responsibilities in setting timelines and deadlines for funding calls.	April 2021	DMT Research team	

2.	Employment				
Commitments	**Current situation**	**New actions/ ideas**	**Deadline**	**Lead**	**Result**
i) Include requirements which support the improvement of working conditions for researchers, in relevant funding calls, terms and	Funding calls				
	There are questions in the application form relating to the credentials of the department (e.g., Athena Swan) which is taken into consideration when scoring.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Build into the funding criteria clear expectations regarding working conditions (including positive leadership and management of researchers/staff employed on the grant).	April 2021	DMT Research team	

conditions, grant reporting, and policies.	Terms and conditions				
	The Trust requires the host organisation to ensure that a safe working environment is provided for all individuals associated with the project.		Monitor (ongoing)		
	The Trust requires the host organisation to ensure that the Grant Project is conducted in a competent and safe manner and that any researcher associated with it is properly advised, forewarned of any risk to health.		Monitor (ongoing)		
	The Trust requires that there be adequate evidence that the appropriate infrastructure and resources will be made available to the Principal Investigator for the purpose of the project.		Monitor (ongoing)		
	Grant reporting				
	Principal Investigators are required to write annual Progress Reports which ask them to describe the aims of the project in the forthcoming year and if they need any additional support to help them meet these aims.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Consider modifying annual Progress Reports to be replaced by, or supplemented with, meetings (in person, by telephone, by videoconference).	February 2022	DMT Research team	
		Revise the questions in the annual Progress Reports to have an increased focus on working conditions and culture.	February 2022	DMT Research team	
		Introduce a reporting technique where all researchers employed on the grant report back the working conditions including health and safety measures, infrastructure, and resources.	February 2022	DMT Research team	
	Policies				
	The Trust works closely with institutions and awardees to ensure that they are supported through the impact of external shocks beyond their control, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that they have the correct measures in place to complete work safely.		Monitor (ongoing)		

ii) Review the impact of relevant funding call requirements on researchers' employment, particularly in relation to career progression and lack of job security.	The Trust has recently launched a new question set in Researchfish to enable the tracking of career progress.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Revise the questions in the annual Progress Reports to have an increased focus on providing experience which offers a diversity of employment opportunities for ECRs and/or support their career progression.	February 2022	DMT Research team	
iii) Support institutions to develop policies and frameworks to promote sustainable employment arrangements, enhance job security and provide opportunities for career progression.		Consider introducing proleptic appointments for post-doctoral researchers (with success-related employment commitment from host institution).	April 2021	DMT Research team	
		Where appropriate, consider allowing post-doctoral researchers without tenure to apply as a PI (with payment of their salary) when accompanied with a letter of support from their host institution.	April 2021	DMT Research Team	
iv) Consider the balance of their relevant funding streams in providing access to research funding and its impact at all career levels.	The Trust has a variety of funding schemes including fellowships and studentships which are targeted at Early Career Researchers (ECRs).		Monitor (ongoing)		
	The Trust's Fellowships are open to healthcare professionals which helps them move into research.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Review all fellowship opportunities to ascertain if there are any missing groups / opportunities.	March 2022	DMT Research team	

3.		Professional and Career development				
Commitments	**Current situation**		**New actions**	**Deadline**	**Lead**	**Result**
i) Incorporate specific professional	Funding calls					
	The Trust asks fellowship applicants about the training they will undertake as part of their project			Monitor (ongoing)		

development 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.	and PIs what training and support for career development their research team will receive.			
	The Trust provides opportunities for Fellows who have recently completed their Fellowship to participate on the selection panel for new fellowship applications.		Monitor (ongoing)	
	Terms and conditions			
		Review and revise the research grant terms and conditions so that if a grant holder fails to provide the training and support set out in their plans, the Trust has the option to consider the circumstances and preclude them from applying for further funding for a period of time, if thought appropriate.	February 2022	Head of Research Policy & Awards
	Grant reporting			
		Review the questions in annual Progress Reports, with a view to ensuring they have appropriate focus on actions and achievements resulting from plans for professional development that were set out in the application.	February 2022	DMT Research team
		Introduce a reporting technique where all researchers (not just the PI) employed on the grant report confidentially on the professional development training, they have been given, and how this compares to what was proposed in the original application.	February 2022	DMT Research team
	Policies			
	The Trust hosts an annual event for ECRs, providing them with the opportunity to present their research to one another, and to engage in workshops focussed on aspects of personal/professional development.		Monitor (ongoing)	
ii) Embed the Concordat Principles and researcher development into research assessment strategies and processes.	The Trust asks both fellowship applicants and their supervisors to outline the training to be undertaken during the period of fellowship.		Monitor (ongoing)	
	The Trust's strategic framework encourages multidisciplinary connections to be made which will encourage networking and facilitate career development.		Monitor (ongoing)	

		Incorporate professional development of all researchers associated with the project as a fundamental element of the assessment criteria in new calls.	April 2021	DMT Research team	
iii)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.	The Trust's funding mechanisms encourage researchers to make connections with other sectors beyond academia, providing increased diversity of opportunity.		Monitor (ongoing)		
		Investigate how the Trust's fellowships can provide opportunities (e.g. secondments) to gain experience in sectors beyond academia (e.g. industrial placements).	February 2022	DMT Research team	
		Consider the content of the Early Career Researchers' seminar programme and feature "non-standard" career development examples.	January 2022	DMT Research team	
		Feature Success Stories on the website showcasing previous DMT award holders who have developed careers outside research.	March 2022	DMT Research team	