

Employment and career development of research staff

Introduction from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to introduce the University's Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff, together with two sets of guidance notes for researchers and for those who work with them.

This Code of Practice, like the national Concordat which it closely reflects and the League of European Research Universities model code of practice, has been introduced in recognition of the realities of research employment in the UK and internationally, in which relatively small numbers of permanent jobs are available.

At Oxford we know that our researchers contribute significantly to our position as one of the world's leading universities: we believe that employment as a researcher should be an attractive option in itself and that, far from being only a potential stepping stone to permanent academic positions, it can be a springboard to a range of other careers.

The code of practice is designed to enable us to put these beliefs into practice, ensuring that those in research-only roles have access to the career development they need.

In recognition of our dedication to supporting and developing our research staff, the University has been awarded the European Commission's **HR Excellence in Research Badge**, which recognises the systems and practices we currently have in place to support researchers' career and professional development in line with the national Concordat.

1. The Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff (pp2-9)
2. Guidance for researchers (pp10-11)
3. Guidance for principal investigators, research group leaders, heads of department and departmental administrators (pp12-16)
4. [The National Concordat](#)
5. The League of European Research Universities model code of practice [LERU CoP](#)  (46kb)

Code of Practice for the employment and career development of research staff

Introduction

This Code of Practice sets out the University's provisions and guidelines for the employment of research staff - broadly defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose. This broad category covers a wide range of staff with different disciplinary backgrounds, levels of training, experience and responsibility, types of contract (fixed or open ended, full or part time), and different career expectations and intentions. The code applies to those research staff employed by the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford.

The code replaces the former code of practice originally introduced in 1997. It was developed by the Research Staff Working Group and issued by the Personnel Committee in the light of the national Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (2008) and the European Charter for Researchers (2005), following appropriate discussion within the Joint Consultative Committee with the Oxford UCU.

The code sets ambitious goals for the University and will therefore be implemented in phases according to a plan approved by the Personnel Committee.

Guiding principles

In its Strategic Plan, the University acknowledges the very significant contribution made by the wide range of researchers on externally funded contracts to the research undertaken in Oxford. The development of career opportunities for these researchers (whose career patterns vary significantly and who come to Oxford from all over the world) and their further integration into the life of the collegiate University are important issues on which the University will continue to work. This code of practice articulates Oxford's aspiration, as a world-leading research-intensive university, to continue to provide a supportive environment for research and research careers at an international level.

The following principles underpin this code of practice. They are based on the principles contained in the national Concordat. The remainder of this code of practice is structured around these principles.

1. The University aims to recruit and select researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.
2. Researchers are significant participants in and contributors to the University's success in research.
3. Researchers must be equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

4. Researchers' personal and career development are recognised and promoted at all stages of their career, and individual researchers share the responsibility for their own personal and career development. Researchers should pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development.

5. Equality and diversity are promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

6. The University will work with other key stakeholders in the sector to undertake regular and collective reviews of progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

The full detail of each of these principles is given below.

Guiding principle 1. The University aims to recruit and select researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.

a. All appointments of research staff will be made in accordance with the University's Equal Opportunities Code of Practice on Recruitment and Selection, as well as in accordance with the management guidelines on recruitment procedures issued by Personnel Services, which promote the principles of fair and open selection and provide for training in fair selection.

Guiding principle 2. Researchers are significant participants in and essential contributors to the University's success in research.

a. The University abides by the provisions of the Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002, in ensuring equal treatment of those on fixed-term contracts compared with those on other types of contract; the use of fixed-term contracts only where objectively justified; and in this context the promotion of the use of open-ended terminable contracts where appropriate. Detailed guidance is provided on the use of appropriate contracts.

Job titles

b. Job titles for research staff may be determined by departmental employing authorities, provided (i) that formal university titles, such as associate professor, reader, professor, and research lecturer are not used unless the relevant divisional authority has been obtained; and (ii) that appropriate care is exercised to avoid confusion with college titles of Fellow and Senior Research Fellow. Standard titles for research staff are:

- Grade 6: Research Assistant
- Grade 7: Researcher or Research Associate
- Grade 8: Senior Researcher, {name of department} Research Fellow, or Senior Research Associate
- Grade 9 and above: {name of department} Senior Research Fellow

c. Researchers may apply to be considered for the award of the university title of Research Lecturer, and under the University's arrangements for recognising distinction they may apply for the titles of Reader and Professor.

Documentation

d. All research staff must receive the same forms of employment documentation as other staff of the University:

- Formal letter of appointment issued normally before the start date of employment and signed by the relevant appointing authority (usually the head of department), specifying the person to whom the researcher is responsible for the performance of his or her duties;
- Written confirmation of any changes in the terms of employment
- A job description and, where available, a list of expected research goals
- The University Handbook for Academic-related Staff via the HR Support website
- [Relevant university policies](#)
- A copy of this code of practice

Responsible conduct of research

e. All researchers should receive a copy of the University's Academic Integrity in Research: Code of Practice and Procedure, which expresses the University's expectations that all members of the University including staff and students, and those who are not members of the University but who are conducting research on University premises or using University facilities, will observe the highest standards in the conduct of their research. Researchers should also have their attention drawn to other university policies and guidelines on [research integrity](#), such as research involving human participants, [conflict of interest](#) and requirements to work under legal licence where applicable, e.g. Home Office.

Defining roles and expectations

f. At the beginning of any appointment, the head of department (or his or her nominee) should clearly identify the immediate supervisor of the researcher and establish the nature of that supervision. Supervisors are responsible for regularly discussing with researchers their research objectives and their work performance; and provision must be made for a clearly-defined probationary period with appropriate probationary review meetings, training needs assessment, and career planning. Departments should ensure that newly appointed research staff are aware of and given time to attend the relevant university induction programme.

g. In exercising their responsibilities, supervisors and other departmental managers should take into consideration the advice provided by the Personnel Committee.

Pay

h. Research staff must be paid on the relevant university scales. Research staff will be entitled to in-scale incremental salary progression on the same basis as other staff. Salary

scale revisions approved by Council and the Personnel Committee will be applied to all research staff, subject to any special provisions required by the funding body concerned. Research staff are eligible to be considered for promotion and merit pay in the same way as other staff.

i. Where a member of staff is re-employed on a subsequent research contract, the new appointment should reflect both the requirements of the role and the experience and professional contribution of the individual concerned. The salary should therefore normally provide, subject to the approval of the funding body concerned, for continued in-scale incremental progression within the grade which the individual held at the end of the previous appointment. Where a researcher has reached the maximum of a normal scale range at the end of a previous appointment, or is likely to reach that maximum during the lifetime of a new project, the grant applicant should consider whether to apply to the funding body and the university authorities for re-grading or use of discretionary increments.

Conditions of service

j. Research staff will be entitled to the same conditions of service as other academic-related staff in relation to:

- hours of work
- annual leave
- long service leave
- membership of the appropriate staff pension scheme
- disciplinary and grievance provisions
- union representation (the University and College Union being the union recognised by the University for research staff) and time off for union duties.

Arrangements for personal development review should include research staff.

k. Subject to the agreement of the funding body concerned to the provisions of the RCUK Concordat, researchers whose position are funded from external grants will also be entitled to the same provisions as other staff for sick-leave, sick pay, and maternity and paternity leave.

Facilities and support

l. Research staff will have access to the appropriate facilities for the performance of their duties.

m. Research staff will also have access to non-academic facilities, such as the University Club and sporting facilities offered by the University, and other benefits available to university staff.

n. Where possible and appropriate, researchers will be offered a mentor to serve as a sounding board, information source, critical friend or career guide.

Intellectual property and academic freedom

- o. Subject to any special requirements imposed by the particular funding body and which will be notified to staff on appointment, researchers have the same intellectual property rights as other academic-related staff. These rights will be specified in the terms of letters of appointment and should be in accordance with published university policy.

- p. Supervisors and grant holders will ensure that researchers receive appropriate credit for work they have undertaken. Researchers have a duty to report the results of all work undertaken to their supervisor and grant holder, and should not normally publish or communicate the results of work outside a research group without the written agreement of the supervisor or grant holder. Research staff who feel that their work is inappropriately restrained, or that their right to publish or promulgate the results of their work is not being respected, or that they are being denied due credit for their work, or that they are improperly restricted from exercising appropriate intellectual freedom of thought or expression, should raise the matter in the first instance with the supervisor or grant holder concerned. If the matter remains unresolved, it may then be raised within the University's grievance procedures, which allow for both informal and formal resolutions and access to trade union support.

Guiding principle 3. Researchers must be equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

Personal development and career planning

- a. Researchers should recognise that the skills and achievements required to move on from a research position may not be the same as the skills and achievements which they displayed to reach that position. Researchers should seek out appropriate opportunities to acquire new skills, through training, developmental activity such as attendance at conferences, or experience; and their supervisors should support them in this. An early discussion to identify the researcher's aspirations and likely career trajectory should take place, usually within the first three months of employment. Researchers may aspire to academic posts at Oxford or at other universities; research careers outside academia; or careers drawing on their research skills but without a specific research focus. They and their supervisors should keep their aspirations under review in the light of progress, and the activities agreed should reflect the trajectory while also enabling the researcher to acquire flexibility and adaptability. In planning and managing their careers, researchers are encouraged to make use of the guidance from the Personnel Committee and the resources available from the divisional skills co-ordinators and the Learning Institute on training and development and the Careers Service on career planning and management.

When funding ends

- b. All researchers should be kept informed about the state of funding for their post and project, and about the likelihood of future funding or employment at the end of the present appointment. Researchers should initiate discussions of future career options with their supervisors, and such discussions should take place well before the end of each individual's

fixed-term contract (around nine months before the end may be appropriate in many circumstances). Efforts should be made to consider realistic career options outside universities as well as within, so that any decision to pursue a further research appointment may be taken consciously, rather than by default. Where a subsequent research appointment at Oxford is to be pursued, limited Bridging and Career Support Funds may be available to provide for continuity of employment across gaps in funding.

c. Researchers wishing to pursue a continuing career in research at the University of Oxford following the expiry of their present appointment will be supported by their supervisor and/or grant holder in the endeavour to find suitable alternative employment. A nominated supervisor will be responsible, under the University's procedures for staff reaching the end of a fixed-term appointment, for drawing the researcher's attention to the University's jobs webpage, and for meeting regularly with the researcher (if the researcher wishes) to discuss potentially suitable alternative employment opportunities.

d. Research staff should also be encouraged to make use of the dedicated careers advice for research staff provided by the Careers Service. The Service can advise researchers on effective CVs, application and interview techniques, as well as on career management and transition skills for those wishing to pursue alternative employment outside of the University.

e. In the event that no suitable alternative employment is found, the researcher may be entitled to statutory redundancy pay

Guiding principle 4. Researchers' personal and career development are recognised and promoted at all stages of their career, and the responsibility for this is shared between the individual and the University. Researchers should pro-actively engage in their own career development.

a. Researchers have responsibility for managing and pursuing their own career. They and their supervisors are encouraged actively to seek out developmental opportunities - such as becoming involved in aspects of research management (e.g. budget and project management), teaching, publication and conference attendance, membership of committees and other community service, the preparation of research proposals, suggesting new research possibilities and sources of funding, and attending relevant courses.

b. Normally only permanent university staff may act as grant holders, but provision exists for researchers graded at 8 or above to be joint holders with permanent staff; and in certain circumstances (for example in the case of senior researchers in small departments, or researchers who hold prestigious external career awards) researchers may be authorised by their head of department (and duly endorsed by Research Services) to act as sole grant holders.

c. Researchers whose likely career trajectory is towards an academic post should be encouraged and supported to undertake teaching and research student supervision duties, if those duties:

- are consistent with the conditions of the funding body
- provide student teaching of the required standard in accordance with the division's quality assurance requirements, and
- have been approved by the person to whom the researcher is formally responsible for the performance of his or her research duties or, where appropriate, by the head of department/faculty board chairman.

Where relevant, researchers will be briefed and advised by the person responsible for commissioning the teaching; and they will have access to appropriate facilities, including courses provided by the Oxford Learning Institute and their divisions, to support their development needs associated with teaching.

d. Research staff are encouraged to play a full part in the life of their department, research group, or relevant academic network. The Regulation [governing the composition of departmental committees](#) provides for senior researchers to be members of such committees. Individual members of research staff may also be elected to membership of the relevant faculty and as such would then be eligible to apply to become a [member of Congregation](#). Research staff holding posts in a university department or institution at grade 8 or above are also eligible to apply to become [members of Congregation](#). Attachments to colleges are, however, limited; but in addition to teaching opportunities (including college lecturerships that may carry common room rights) and junior and senior research fellowships, some colleges provide attachment schemes for small numbers of post-doctoral research staff. Such schemes enable research staff to make appropriate and valued contributions to the college's academic and social life.

Guiding principle 5. Equality and diversity are promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

a. Research staff, like all other staff of the University, are protected by and have responsibilities under the University's [Equality Policy](#), and supervisors should ensure that they understand the implications of the policy for their management practice. The policy applies (but is not limited) to advertising of jobs and recruitment and selection, to training and development, to opportunities for promotion, to conditions of service, benefits, facilities and pay, to health and safety, to conduct at work, to grievance and disciplinary procedures and to termination of employment.

Guiding principle 6. The University will work with other key stakeholders in the sector to undertake regular and collective reviews of progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

a. This code of practice will be implemented according to a plan to be approved by the Personnel Committee.

b. The University will keep this Code of Practice under review and will regularly monitor its operation, via staff surveys such as the Careers in Research Online Survey, via the Joint Committee with the Oxford University and College Union, and via its normal HR reporting

mechanisms. It will also take part in periodic reviews of research careers through participation in national forums

Implementation and training

Those responsible for implementing and supporting this code of practice include researchers themselves and their supervisors; heads of department and departmental administrators; those providing support services for research staff such as the divisional skills co-ordinators, the Careers Service and the Oxford Learning Institute; and the University's Personnel Committee. Training will be provided to support implementation in accordance with the implementation plan approved by the Personnel Committee.

Guidance for Researchers

Checklist

This checklist has been produced by the Research Staff Working Group. The following questions are offered as prompts for researchers both for discussion with supervisors and for pursuing independently. They should be used in combination with the parallel document 'Researchers' careers', which has more detailed information and provides links to sources of further advice.

In the first three months of your contract

- What do I want to get out of this experience as a researcher at Oxford?
- Where do I see myself being in five or ten years' time? What are the implications of that for my career and professional development while I'm here? What opportunities do I need to look for?
- Do I understand the terms of my contract, including the fixed-term nature of it?
- Have I seen a copy of the University's Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff?
- Have I looked at the staff handbook on the HR Support website?
- Have I completed my initial induction? Do I know what induction procedures there are in the department/group? What have I been sent or given? What do I need to know about? Who shall I ask? (My supervisor? The departmental administrator? A colleague?)
- Do I know about research and publication protocols and codes of practice in my group and department, and [in the University generally](#)? Do I know what [training is available from the University on research integrity](#)?
- How clear am I about what is expected of me in this project?
- Do I know what the [Careers Service](#) offers specifically for researchers?
- Do I know what the [Oxford Learning Institute](#) and my division offer (e.g. induction seminars, seminars on teaching)?
- Do I know what the University and College Union offers for research staff?

During the contract

- How is my work progressing? Have I asked for feedback from my supervisor or from colleagues? What am I doing well? What could I improve? How am I working on these?
- How well am I attending to my career? What opportunities have I taken (e.g. conferences, publications, grant applications, teaching, training events and networking)?
- How well am I attending to my personal development? Have I had a personal development review meeting?
- What are my achievements? What are my goals? How do I see my future beyond the end of this contract? What action am I taking towards this?
- Have I registered with the [Careers Service for Researchers](#)?
- Where can I get advice?

Approaching the end of the contract (typically around nine months before the end)

- Have I familiarised myself with university procedures relating to the expiry of fixed term contracts?
- What are the prospects for my continuing employment on this (or a different) project? (Do I want to stay?)
- What discussions have I had with my supervisor about this? What communication have I had with my departmental administrator? What action am I taking to secure the job that I want when this one finishes?
- Where else can I get advice and support? In particular, have I checked what advice for researchers is available to me from the [Careers Service](#) or from divisional resources (see **further information**)?

Guidance for principal investigators, research group leaders, heads of department and departmental administrators

This guidance relates to the employment of researchers, especially those in posts which are funded by external research sponsoring bodies, such as the Research Councils, Royal Society, British Academy, charities, trusts, government departments, industry, and other bodies.

It is based upon elements of the University's formal Code of Practice on the employment and career development of research staff, but provides more detailed guidance on key aspects of researchers' career paths.

This guidance has been approved by the University's Personnel Committee, with the expectation that all departments will introduce arrangements based on this guidance appropriate to the local context. Local factors which might influence variations in practice include the typical length of contract and seniority of research staff and PIs; the extent to which research staff work in groups and teams; and the security of external funding.

The guidance, below, consists of:

- **A diagrammatic overview** of the respective responsibilities of departmental administrators and heads of department on the one hand, and PIs, supervisors and research group leaders on the other
- Some **reflective questions** for principle investigators and others to use to guide their supervision of researchers careers.

Diagrammatic overview - Table of responsibilities

	Departmental administrators and heads of department	Supervisors and research group leaders
Recruitment and selection of researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all those appointing research staff have received training in fair selection and are aware of the Equal Opportunities Code of Practice on Recruitment and Selection and guidelines on recruitment procedures • Apply suitable job title • Issue formal letter of appointment • Ensure appropriate contract is used • Set appropriate probationary period – where possible of not less than one year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow guidelines on recruitment procedures and Equal Opportunities Code of Practice on Recruitment and Selection; • take part in training in fair selection
Newly-appointed researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identify the immediate supervisor of the researcher • Appoint mentor to help researcher settle in • Ensure researchers from overseas have access to information on any personal matters such as housing, banking, health care and social security • Include research staff in departmental induction arrangements, covering: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Checklist for researchers 2. University Handbook for Academic-related Staff 3. Information on divisional and central training provision for researchers 4. Information on welcome sessions run by the University for research staff 5. Information on resources such as libraries, technical assistance, lab facilities and materials, staff development opportunities, membership of the University and College Union, and social facilities such as the University Club and the Oxford Research Staff Society 6. Information on the impartial career review services that the Careers Service can offer researchers (this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider reflective questions 1 • Set up face-to-face meeting to clarify the job description, the degree of freedom for pursuing the research objectives, expectations about output and progress, publication protocols, teaching opportunities and/or obligations, and the researcher's own aspirations and skills • Set up meeting (can be with another colleague) to clarify (where relevant) lab procedures and practices, health and safety, ethical standards and other aspects of academic integrity in research • Hold formal review meeting within the first year as part of the probationary review arrangements, covering performance to date, the researcher's and the supervisor's expectations about a career trajectory, and professional development plan.

	Departmental administrators and heads of department	Supervisors and research group leaders
	<p>may be particularly important for individuals on short term contracts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt supervisors to conduct initial meeting and probationary review meeting; follow up and provide support where necessary 	
Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include research staff in department's merit pay scheme • Ensure research staff salaries comply with equal pay requirements and Fixed-Term Employees Regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in department's merit pay scheme in respect of research staff • Decide starting salaries in light of the requirements of the role and the experience and professional contribution of the individual
Conditions of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure conditions of service are in line with the requirements of this Code of Practice on the employment and career development of research staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Career planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt supervisors to conduct formal meeting nine to twelve months before the end of the contract; follow up and provide support where necessary • Include researchers in arrangements for personal development review • When notified, trigger the University's procedures for managing and ending fixed-term contracts, including nominating supervisor • Highlight upcoming careers-related workshops and events provided by Careers Service and divisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider reflective questions 2 • Hold formal meeting nine to twelve months before the end of the first contract, to clarify the likelihood of further grant funding and options if this is not likely; notify the departmental administrator if further funding unlikely • Hold personal development review meetings with researchers if they request it • Hold formal meeting nine to twelve months before the end of the second contract, to review the researcher's career progress to date and the likelihood of their acquiring an academic or similar post - refer to relevant support services • Notify the departmental administrator if further funding unlikely
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that researchers are kept appropriately informed about the state of funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider reflective questions 3 • Notify the departmental administrator that no further funding is available

Guidance for PIs: reflective questions

This guidance is intended for principal investigators, research group leaders, heads of department and departmental administrators. It should be read in conjunction with the table of responsibilities, above.

Reflective questions 1 - early days of the contract

Supervisors should ask themselves:

- What departmental induction processes are in place for me to draw on?
- Have I clarified the job description and my expectations of the researcher's 'output'? Have I provided a copy of the research proposal, including the deliverables against which our progress will be assessed?
- Have I explained that the contract is a fixed-term one and clarified the implications of this with the researcher?
- What degree of freedom does the researcher have in pursuing the research objectives? Has this been discussed?
- Is the researcher aware of the relevant standards and policies on research integrity, and have they agreed to observe these?
- How clear is the researcher about laboratory procedure and practice (where appropriate)?
- Have I explained the protocols for publication (authorships, favoured publication methods)?
- Does the researcher know what resources are available – and, if not, do they know how to find out – in terms of library, computing, laboratory facilities and materials, and technical assistance?
- Is the researcher from overseas? Do they need information or support regarding accommodation, bank accounts, signing on with a doctor, getting a national insurance number, etc.? Do they need support with English language development, and if so have I given them information about the University's Language Centre?
- What other information does the researcher need (e.g. about university induction events, or the University's Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff)? Have they received this information?
- What teaching opportunities and/or obligations are there for the researcher and have I communicated these?
- What opportunities have I offered for the researcher to explain their own needs and aspirations, and to bring out any skills they may have that could contribute to the project or more widely to the group or department?

Reflective questions 2 – during employment

In considering how to support researchers' career development, supervisors should ask themselves:

- How is the researcher's work progressing? What are they doing well? What could they improve? How am I communicating my views on these? Am I making my expectations clear?
- How is the researcher attending to their own professional development? What opportunities and encouragement am I offering for them to do so (e.g. conferences,

publications, grant applications, college attachments, teaching, committee membership, training events)?

- How does the researcher see their future beyond the end of this contract? What action are they taking? Is the researcher aware of the support available from the [University Careers Service](#), the [Oxford Learning Institute](#) and divisional research training teams; are they aware of the 'Jobs' page of the University's website?

Reflective questions 3 - during the final third of the contract

Supervisors should ask themselves:

- What are my expectations regarding output at this stage?
- What are the prospects for the researcher's continuing employment on this (or a different) project? What discussions have I had with the researcher about this?
- Have I made the researcher aware of university procedures relating to the expiry of fixed term contracts?
- Have I reminded the researcher of the Careers Advice available from the Careers Service (if appropriate) as their current contract enters the final phase, and indicated options for additional support available through the divisions?