

Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment

Case study “UKRI People and Teams Action Plan”

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Country	Country/Region/International UK
Name	Official name of the initiative UKRI People and Teams Action Plan
Institution	Name of the institution(s) responsible for the initiative UK Research and Innovation
Stakeholders	Names of other organisations/communities involved All research institutions in the UK
Year	When the initiative was launched March 2023
Documentation	Link to the main document describing the initiative UKRI Action Plan People and teams
Website	Link to the website of the initiative (if available) UKRI launches new people and teams action plan – UKRI UKRI people and teams action plan – UKRI
Summary	Brief description of the initiative <p>UKRI’s people and teams action plan sets out how the development of skilled people and teams in research and innovation will be supported by the institution. The plan takes builds on – and expands – Technician Commitment and Researcher Development Concordat.</p> <p>The plan is also includes a review of progress against the published Technician Commitment and Researcher Development Concordat action plans.</p>

Target audience	Description of the main target audience of the initiative Research Institutions and funders
Geographical Scope	Description of the primary geographical scope of application UK
International potential:	Description of the international potential for adaptation Many of the issues identified are applicable to international contexts and reflect recommendation from International concordats and guidelines (e.g. DORA)
Goal	<p>The strategy proposed has the following goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a foundation of inclusive environments and cultures that promote staff wellbeing and support people to reach their potential. 2. Enable people to understand the broader context of their work and support them to pursue great ideas without barriers. 3. Facilitate movement between disciplines, sectors, business, and academia. 4. Fill the middle ground and build connections between stakeholders. 5. Recognize the full range of contributions and contributors to research and innovation. 6. Provide more opportunities to work across siloes. 7. Increase cross-training and preparation for a wider range of roles. 8. Support a wider range of career pathways within research organizations. 9. Ensure strategic consideration of people as an organizational asset and a national strength. 10. Avoid imposing top-down solutions and develop incentives that support stakeholders to be innovative and share good practices.
Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing Eligibility and Team Building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Broaden who can apply for funding and how project teams are built. o Test a new grant roles policy with more roles eligible to apply as project leaders. o Pilot approaches to increase visibility and recognition for a wider range of contributors. 2. Removing Barriers for Specialist Roles:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Ensure technical and skills specialist posts are eligible for indirect and estates costs. o Engage with research organizations to identify and address barriers to sustainability for these roles. <p>3. Increasing Visibility and Recognition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Collect sufficient data on staff supported by funding to understand their roles and contributions. o Ensure new funding services recognize a wider range of roles on funded grants. <p>4. Embedding Workforce Development Incentives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Encourage project leads to develop and maintain leadership skills. o Support the career and professional development of team members. o Develop baseline application guidance for research funding opportunities. <p>5. Grant Assessor Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Assess project leads on their ability to develop others and maintain effective working relationships. o Ensure staffing models have sufficient technical and methodological capability. o Evaluate opportunities for team members to work across disciplinary silos and build connectivity. o Assess the commitment and support from host organizations. <p>6. Building Institutional Incentives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Align incentives with what is rewarded and expected at the institutional level. o Include assessment elements in the successor to REF 2021 that reward and recognize institutions supporting skilled people and teams. o Ensure institute and block grant reviews consider the development and support of people and teams
Qualitative	<p>Description of recommendations regarding qualitative assessment</p> <p>UKRI Proposed an increased importance attributed to applicants' leadership and management skills and backgrounds, to be initially established through a qualitative analysis of applications. [see UKRI funding services (R4RI module 2)]</p>

Quantitative	Description of recommendations regarding quantitative assessment
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing Diversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Track the diversity of successful applicants and assessors in terms of protected characteristics and career backgrounds using UKRI funding services and EDI data. 2. Specialist Roles and Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Monitor the increase in technical, methodological, and skills specialist roles, and the use of pooled and cross-cutting resources in grant applications through UKRI funding services. o Assess the presence of these roles and career pathways in organizations funded by UKRI via institutional publications and engagement. 3. Leadership and Management Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Emphasize people leadership and management skills in grant applicants, initially through qualitative analysis of applications (R4RI module 2). 4. Cost Recovery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Ensure greater cost recovery of technical and support roles from funded awards through institutional engagement. 5. Employment Stability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Reduce reliance on fixed-term contracts, tracked via HESA Staff (TERMS). 6. Career Aspirations and Transitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Broaden career aspirations for early career researchers through sector and organizational surveys (CEDARS) and institutional engagement. o Reduce barriers for career transitions to other sectors for early career researchers, monitored via HESA Staff (RESCON and ACTLEAVE fields). 7. Reporting and Governance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Improve reporting of both upheld and non-upheld bullying and harassment, and research integrity investigations in annual reports. o Ensure appropriate governance arrangements are in place to support an environment where practice reflects organizational policies through the UKRI Funding assurance program. 8. Workforce Diversity:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Enhance diversity of the research workforce across various roles and levels of seniority, tracked via HESA Staff (Characteristics fields) and UKRI Grants. <p>9. Learning and Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increase uptake of learning and development resources for UKRI’s funding administrators, monitored through UKRI management information (MI) and intranet data. <p>10. Employee Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Boost participation in the UKRI people survey from Centres, Institutes, and Units. o Provide clearer career pathways and support for staff, tracked via the UKRI people survey and engagement. o Foster greater community building and engagement, with staff feeling part of “one UKRI” through people surveys and staff engagement. <p>11. Exit Surveys and Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increase completion of exit surveys and collection of next destination data, monitored through UKRI MI data. <p>12. EDI Evidence and Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Discuss EDI evidence and indicators in the Workforce EDI plan.
Diversity	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of diversity contributions, outputs and impacts</p> <p>The UKRI ECR Forum was launched to address a strategic gap in engagement with early career researchers (ECRs). This initiative ensures that ECRs can contribute to various strategy and policy developments, including the R&D People and Culture Strategy, UKRI Strategy, Future Research Assessment Programme, draft EDI Strategy, Review of research bureaucracy, and the Nurse review of research performing organizations.</p> <p>Key elements include:</p> <p>1. Engagement and Representation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o ECRs are involved in advising on training and development in the arts and humanities through the AHRC’s Statement of Commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. o Technicians are represented in decision-making via the Talent and Skills advisory group, the Technician

	<p>Commitment Steering Board, and regional interest groups.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Advisory Structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The BBSRC's People and Talent Strategy Advisory Panel Researcher Subgroup supports the implementation of the RDC. o The EPSRC Research Technical Professional working group aids in developing and implementing action plans. 3. Policy and Strategy Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Technicians' voices are included in the development of UKRI policy and strategy, such as the Future Research Assessment Programme and the draft EDI Strategy consultation. 4. Recognition of Diverse Contributions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The initiative acknowledges the benefits of engaging with the ECR forum, technical community, postgraduate researchers, and various roles contributing to research and innovation (R&I). o There is a focus on continuing to benefit from such engagement in advisory structures, including the advisory group pilot. <p>By involving a diverse range of contributors and ensuring their voices are heard in policy and strategy development, the initiative supports the recognition and impact of diverse contributions in the research and innovation sector.</p>
<p>Intersectoral</p>	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of intersectorality</p> <p>The UKRI ECR Forum was launched to address a strategic gap in engagement with early career researchers (ECRs). This initiative ensures that ECRs can contribute to various strategy and policy developments, including the R&D People and Culture Strategy, UKRI Strategy, Future Research Assessment Programme, draft EDI Strategy, Review of research bureaucracy, and the Nurse review of research performing organizations.</p> <p>Key elements include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engagement and Representation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o ECRs are involved in advising on training and development in the arts and humanities through the

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Career-stage	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of career-stage</p> <p>The TALENT commission report is a valuable resource for understanding the role of technicians in the UK's academic research environment. UKRI collaborated with the project team to create a Funding Technical Staff in Research explainer, based on a short research project. The report highlights both financial and non-financial barriers to sustainable employment and career structures for technical roles, supported by UKRI's Research sustainability workstream findings.</p> <p>The report suggests a career structure for technical roles that</p>

	<p>research organizations could implement. It indicates that barriers to career structures for technical roles are as much cultural as financial. Often, the importance of technicians is overlooked, and resources for technical roles are the first to be cut to reduce grant costs, limiting career advancement opportunities. The TALENT commission report points out that career progression for technicians is often restricted to poorly functioning regrading/job evaluation processes.</p> <p>At the “lecturer level” career stage, technicians may be eligible for UKRI funding depending on their discipline. However, a significant barrier is the lack of common understanding around eligibility and institutional support for applications, partly due to varying eligibility criteria across funders and UKRI councils.</p> <p>Due to the coronavirus pandemic and resulting resource pressures, UKRI has not yet completed a similar analysis for researchers. However, a working group on employment fairness will be established by the Researcher Development Concordat Strategy Group in the coming year. Additionally, UKRI, through the Research England Development (RED) fund, is supporting the establishment of the UK Institute of Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS) to implement the TALENT commission’s recommendations.</p>
Career-path	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of career-paths</p> <p>[UKRI is creating an evidence base to develop a forward-looking career framework for technicians. As both a funder and an employer, UKRI collaborates with various stakeholders, including the Science Council, research organizations, internal CIUs, technician skills and development organizations, and businesses. This collaboration aims to collect examples of good practices, existing career pathways, transition points, support needs, barriers to implementation, and issues like vulnerability to automation. This evidence base will help identify how technical careers can be supported and highlight gaps for intervention.</p> <p>UKRI is aware of the financial and non-financial barriers to career progression for technical roles within their own employees and the research organizations they fund. To support policy and strategy development, UKRI engages with research organizations to identify the barriers they face in developing and implementing career paths</p>

	for technicians, including the barriers and incentives that prevent the development of career pathways and senior technical roles.
Toolbox	Description of related practical guides and toolkits Technician Commitment in STFC's workforce planning toolkit pilot
Implementation	Description of implementation process This is detailed at the end of the plan, with a traffic light system describing the stage of progression, pp 23–ss UKRI Action Plan People and teams .
Uptake	Description of implementation uptake N/A
Challenges	Description of identified implementation challenges/obstacles. UKRI is focused on ensuring their investment in research and innovation (R&I) results in high-quality outcomes. The best environment for this values rigor, technical and methodological expertise, the quality of ideas and experiments over publication venues, and a diversity of contributions and types of R&I. This requires a supportive and developmental culture. Realizing the spillover benefits through the development of people and their career journeys is a key part of UKRI's investment in R&I. UKRI's incentive structures must recognize that environment and culture are crucial to the capability to deliver a proposed project and realize its benefits, and they will ensure their funding decisions reflect this.
Benefits	Description of identified implementation benefits. The strategy aims to build a foundation of inclusive environments and cultures that promote staff wellbeing and support people to reach their potential, as outlined in their draft Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. It should enable people to understand the broader context of their work and support them to pursue great ideas without barriers, facilitating movement between disciplines, sectors, business, and academia. It recognises the full range of contributions and contributors to research and innovation, provide more opportunities to work across silos, increase cross-training and preparation for a wider range of roles, support a wider range of career pathways within research organizations, and ensure strategic consideration of people as an organizational asset and a national strength.