

Implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Response by the Wellcome Trust

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1. The Wellcome Trust is an independent global charitable foundation, the largest in the UK, dedicated to achieving extraordinary improvements in human and animal health. We spend over £600 million each year to support the brightest scientists with the best ideas in biomedical research. Our breadth of support includes medical humanities, public engagement, education and the application of research to improve health.
2. We welcome the Concordat as we have long recognised the need to support the careers of researchers and, in many respects, have led the way in the development of funding policy and practice in the area. As a signatory, in addition to complying with the basic requirement that “The Wellcome Trust expects organisations that hold Wellcome Trust grants to adopt the principles of the revised Concordat for the management of their researchers”, the Trust has numerous policies and practices which are fully consistent with the Concordat. As most of our funding supports individual researchers and their teams in universities, it is important that these organisations provide environments in which both men and women can excel at all levels of their research careers.
3. Some key examples of our policies are listed below with reference to the most relevant Concordat principles:

Principle 1 –

- We offer a comprehensive range of prestigious personal support awards at all stages of the research career; studentships, fellowship awards and Investigator Awards that provide training and career support for basic and clinical scientists, dentists and veterinarians appropriate for their career stage. These awards are tough to get – competition is fierce – but there are many opportunities for talented researchers.
- The Wellcome Trust provides the holders of our non-clinical research fellowships with significant salary supplements which are awarded in addition to the fellows’ basic pay as set by their employing institutions (<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Managing-a-grant/Finance-and-employment/wtd004092.htm>).

Principle 2 –

- UK universities that have received significant Trust grant support receive funds from the Institutional Strategic Support Fund, launched in 2011. As with the Value in People award scheme (2002-11) the universities can use these funds to help with the recruitment, training, career progression and retention of key staff. This can include, for example, providing a salary for new recruits until a post or fellowship becomes available or bridging funding for researchers on fixed- term contracts.

Principles 3 & 4 –

- The principal applicant/fellow and each researcher employed on a grant is automatically provided with a standard travel to meetings allowance of between £1,000 and £2,000 *per annum* to attend scientific meetings. Investigator Award

holders can also request an allowance for themselves and researchers on their award to travel to and attend scientific meetings.

(<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Biomedical-science/Application-information/WTD004084.htm>).

- Funds provided on Trust grants may be used flexibly to cover the costs of formal transferable skills and personal development training courses for our postdoctoral researchers and fellows.
- Free communication and engagement training is available for all Wellcome research grant holders and their group members

(<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Education-resources/Communicating-your-research/index.htm>).

Principle 5 –

- The Trust holds regular meetings of its fellows where career development is discussed in detail amongst other topics. In addition, Trust staff often visit universities to talk about the issues that prospective candidates should consider before making an application.
- The use of a preliminary application stage for all our personal awards mean that candidates benefit from early advice on whether they are competitive and suitable to make a full application for a fellowship.

Principle 6 –

- We do our utmost to provide flexible and fair funding that allows excellent applicants, whether male or female, to be successful.
 - Time (full- or part-time) spent outside a research environment is taken into consideration when assessing eligibility to apply for support for all Wellcome Trust fellowship schemes.
 - The Trust's Research Career Re-entry Fellowship provides an opportunity for those who have been away from research for over two years to re-enter the workforce. (<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Biomedical-science/Funding-schemes/Fellowships/Basic-biomedical-fellowships/WTD004380.htm>).
 - Funds may be requested for the full- or part-time salary costs of fellows or staff that carry out the research and once awards are made, individuals can also change the full- or part-time basis of their employment. The Trust will supplement grants by the actual costs incurred in meeting the salary of those on maternity/paternity/sick leave (less any recoverable statutory pay). In all these situations, the tenure of the award can be extended as appropriate.

Principle 7 –

- Our End of Grant Reports request information on the principal applicant/fellow and all staff employed on Trust grants. This includes their current posts, how the grant has contributed to their professional development and any training provided to other researchers.
- We have developed a longitudinal prospective study to track Trust award holders' careers over time. The "Wellcome Trust Career Tracker" will allow us to gain a better understanding of the career progression and career choices that award holders make; this will help to inform the Trust's provision of research and career support over time (<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Biomedical-science/Research-careers/WTDV026334.htm>).

4. These examples illustrate our funding philosophy which centres on supporting and developing the very best researchers, as well as providing them with a high-quality experience. This philosophy has driven the development of Trust funding schemes and policies, as exemplified in the Trust's 10 year Strategic Plan (2010-2020) where 'supporting outstanding researchers' is one of the three funding focus areas.