10 Days Professional Development FAQ Guidance

# Background

The University of Oxford and the Medical Sciences Division has committed to “*Provide opportunities, structured support, encouragement and time for researchers to engage in a* ***minimum of 10 days professional development pro rata per year***”.

This commitment stems from the ‘[Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/)’ and is included in the University’s [Concordat Action Plan](https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/concordat-action-plan/time-for-professional-development).

The Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences would like to ensure that staff undertake continuing professional development in line with this commitment. This guidance considers some of the frequently asked questions.

# What is the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and Concordat Action Plan?

In April 2021, the University of Oxford signed the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/). This is an agreement between universities, research institutes and funders to support the career development of researchers in the UK.

The [Concordat Action Plan](https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/concordat-action-plan/time-for-professional-development) was approved in April 2022, and contains a series of activities that will help the University of Oxford to deliver against the Concordat. Action 1.3 aims by 2025 to “ensure that all researchers are able to benefit from the availability of at least ten days professional development (pro rata) per year”. The department has chosen to extend this to all staff groups.

# What is continuing professional development and why is it important?

Professional development takes many forms, encompassing any activities that enhance professional competencies or enable you to gain experiences that contributes to your current role or future career (which may be outside academia). It is important to consider the diversity of opportunities, as much professional development activity that is already happening may not be recognised as such. Such opportunities may arise within a research group, department, university, or elsewhere. A [webpage](https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub/professional-development-researchers) is available to support planning of researchers’ professional development.

# What professional development activities can I undertake?

Unless specifically excluded by your funding body, you can use your 10 days professional development for activities that contribute to progression in your chosen career, whether that is inside or outside academia.

There is no prescriptive list of ‘eligible’ activities; instead professional development includes anything that enhances your skills and abilities to do your work.

It may directly contribute to your current role or to your future career.

Some examples of professional development for research staff include:

* Attending training, workshops, and courses;
* Contributing to a working group or committee;
* Taking on a leadership or supervision role;
* Organising seminars or events;
* Choosing to speak at or attend a conference;
* Working on a funding application;
* Learning from others through mentoring or networking events, or the [Careers Service](https://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/advice-appointments/#collapse2060831).
* Workplace shadowing
* Participating in policy development, public engagement or knowledge exchange activities
* Writing up a paper from a previous research project

Further useful links are provided in the [Researchers’ Toolkit](https://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/research/researchers-toolkit) and by the [Researcher Hub](https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub/personal-professional-development).

# Do conferences count?

Yes, they may be counted since conferences provide valuable experience and networking opportunities to help build your career.

A few individuals may have funding terms that exclude the use of conference days - please check this with your line manager.

# Who is eligible for 10 days professional development?

The Concordat defines researchers as "individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed specifically for this purpose by a higher education institution or research institute.”

All staff in the department are encouraged to take their professional development allowance.

In The Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, we aim to foster an inclusive and supportive work culture. We therefore wish to

* Ensure that you are aware of the minimum of 10 days of professional development per year (pro rata)
* Encourage all staff to undertake [Personal and Career Development Reviews](https://www.nds.ox.ac.uk/staff-gateway/personnel/pdr) and discuss professional development opportunities with their line managers.

# How do I arrange the time for professional development?

The first step is to discuss timing with your line manager.

In NDS, professional development should be recorded within your PDR.

Your 10 days of professional development per year are aligned to the University annual leave cycle (1st October – 30th September) and are pro-rata for part-time staff.

# Why does professional development need to be recorded?

Information on 10 days professional development may be used by the department to provide evidence

* that all researchers and professional and support staff have access to and are supported in their professional development
* of how information about professional development is communicated to researchers and professional and support staff
* how much time researchers and professional and supports staff are spending on professional development
* for funder audits
* for the REF exercise

# Do I need my Line Manager’s agreement to take time for professional development?

Yes - please discuss with your line manager to avoid disrupting planned work.

Both you and your line manager are strongly encouraged to make use of the 10 days professional development. Uptake will be monitored through Personal Development Reviews.

# What do I do if I am finding it difficult to take professional development time?

If you find yourself in need of advice, please contact the HR team at [recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk).

There is no penalty for seeking advice and we can assure you all conversations are confidential.

Also remember that the HR team can also advise if you ever need support and a confidential and safe space to discuss difficult things happening with your peers/line manager.

# Are the 10 days part of my annual leave?

Professional development is separate from your annual leave allowance and will provide paid work time for you to focus on professional development activities.

Your 10 days professional development per year are aligned to the University annual leave cycle (1st October – 30th September) and are pro-rata for part-time staff.

# How does professional development link to my Personal Development Review (PDR) or Career Development Review (CDR)?

Professional development days allow you to take time out from your regular work to focus on your professional development, optimise your skill set and prepare your next steps.

Your annual PDR gives you the opportunity to reflect on and discuss your progress with your line manager. We encourage everyone to

* take part
* record and review your professional development in the past year
* identify the skills you want to develop and professional development to undertake in the forthcoming year.

[Information about the departmental PDR process can be found here](https://www.nds.ox.ac.uk/staff-gateway/personnel/pdr).

Uptake of the 10 days professional development will be specifically discussed at these meetings.

# Is there funding available for professional development activities?

The University and Division provide many free courses and workshops that can benefit staff, and we recommend staff familiarise themselves with the [University’s training offering on CoSy](https://cosy.ox.ac.uk/accessplan/LMSPortal/UI/Page/Dashboard.aspx).

NDS offers a dedicated [Training Fund](https://www.nds.ox.ac.uk/staff-gateway/personnel/career-development/nds-training-fund) to allow staff to undertake training that is external to the University. You can find information on this fund, including the amount of funding available and eligibility criteria, on the staff gateway.

A list of training providers can be found [here](https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/personal-and-professional-development/training-and-workshops).

# My question is not answered here; Who should I ask?

Please contact HR if you are a professional and support staff member or, if you are a researcher, the [Research Staff Representative](https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub/research-staff-representatives) if you have any further questions that have not been answered here.