

Women in Research Charter (GOV.UK) – Key Points

The **Women in Research Charter**, launched by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (updated July 2026), is a **voluntary commitment for research funders and research-performing organisations** to improve outcomes for women across the UK research system.

Link to full document: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/women-in-research-charter/women-in-research-charter>

Why it was created

- Women remain underrepresented in senior research roles despite strong participation in education and early-career research.
 - Key barriers include:
 - Caring and family responsibilities.
 - Inflexible working practices.
 - Bias in funding, recruitment and promotion.
 - Bullying, harassment and exclusionary workplace cultures.
 - The Charter aims to retain and advance talented women researchers and strengthen the UK's research capacity.
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The Six Themes

1. Improved Support for Parents and Carers

Goal: Women should be able to have children or caring responsibilities without harming their research careers.

Main commitments:

- Doctoral researchers should receive a minimum family leave offer equivalent to UKRI standards.
 - Better support for childcare and caring costs.
 - Clear publication of family leave and caring-support policies.
 - Support for researchers returning after leave.
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2. Consistent Data and Transparency

Goal: Enable meaningful comparison of progress across organisations.

Main commitments:

- Funders publish data on grant applications and success rates by sex.
 - Institutions publish data on:
 - o Research staff by grade and contract type.
 - o Recruitment outcomes.
 - o Promotion applications and success rates.
 - Greater consistency and transparency in reporting.
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3. Enabling Flexible Working

Goal: Flexible working should be genuinely accessible without career penalties.

Main commitments:

- Funding schemes should support part-time work, career breaks and adjusted timelines.
 - Institutions should implement flexibility consistently rather than relying on individual managers.
 - Clear communication of available flexibilities.
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4. Eliminating Bias in Grant and Job Applications

Goal: Researchers should be assessed fairly regardless of career breaks or non-linear careers.

Main commitments:

- Assessment processes should recognise:
 - o Career breaks.
 - o Part-time working.
 - o Caring responsibilities.
 - Recruitment, promotion and funding decisions should minimise bias.
 - More inclusive and consistent panel processes.
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5. Inclusive Workplace Culture

Goal: Create safe, respectful research environments.

Main commitments:

- Zero tolerance for bullying, harassment and misconduct.
 - Clear and trusted reporting mechanisms.
 - Appropriate protections for those raising concerns.
 - Consistent provision of reasonable adjustments.
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6. Sharing Best Practice

Goal: Spread successful interventions across the sector.

Main commitments:

- Signatories share evidence of what works.
 - Annual publication of actions and progress.
 - Cross-sector learning between universities, funders, industry and international partners.
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Accountability and Governance

Signatories must:

- Appoint a **board-level lead** accountable for delivery.
- Publish **annual progress reports**.
- Publish agreed datasets and evidence of actions taken.
- Participate in sector-wide learning and benchmarking.

The Charter relies on:

- Transparency.
 - Peer comparison.
 - Public reporting.
 - Embedding expectations into funding and organisational processes.
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Notable Point for Universities

A particularly significant commitment is the expectation that doctoral researchers receive family leave support at least equivalent to **UKRI's maternity and partner leave provisions**, addressing one of the biggest reasons women leave research careers.

Current Signatories

The Charter has already been signed by a large number of organisations including the following CRANE investigators:

- **Abertay University**
- **Birmingham University**
- **University of Oxford**
- **UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)**

Overall message

The Charter seeks to move beyond aspirations to **specific, measurable actions** that improve recruitment, retention, progression and leadership opportunities for women researchers, while increasing transparency and accountability across the UK research system.