**Context of Institution**

Our Transforming Lives Strategy sets out Sheffield Hallam University’s vision to be the world’s leading applied university, achieving outstanding outcomes for our students and our city, and to create knowledge that provides practical solutions to real world challenges. We are looking ahead at how we need to adapt for the future. Our strategy is driven by a new set of values and priorities which recognise the impact of the pandemic on Sheffield Hallam University and society at large. We have enhanced our connections to our region and our communities through a Civic University Agreement. We have implemented our Hallam Values (collaboration, ambition, inclusion, innovation, integrity) to represent our philosophies and principles, and we have embarked on a Future Strategies Programme to deliver our strategy for the next 3-5 years.

We have an ambitious, emerging plan to deliver research and innovation excellence. Driven by a new Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation (appointed April 2022), the plan builds on the Research Institute structures put in place in 2020 to galvanise collaboration and interdisciplinary research, but critically it places *our people and culture* at the heart of our activities. Four strategic priorities - *Capacity, Capability, Connectivity, and Culture* – position the University for sustainable growth, underpinned by Researcher and Innovator Development. These strands will drive our activities forward and provide the platform for implementation of our forward-looking Concordat Action Plan.

Since our 2021 report, we have continued efforts to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on our research community, including the re-opening of research facilities, the transition from remote working to a new flexible and hybrid model of working, and targeted support for our early career researchers (including doctoral researchers) through bursary extensions and funding schemes to support research. More widely across the University there is an enhanced employee wellbeing offer as part of our post-covid recovery.

The University employs 1687 academic staff (excluding Associate Lecturers who do not have research as part of their employment contract). Our Academic Careers Framework sets out expectations for progression across four strands; i) academic citizenship and leadership; i) research and innovation; iii) teaching and learning; iv) external and professional engagement. Staff can move flexibly across these strands, however, our target audience for the Concordat are those that follow the research and innovation strand. Our **primary audience** includes 435 academics on teaching and research contracts who are designated as having ‘Significant Responsibility for Research’ (SRR) in line with REF 2021 Codes of Practice, and 193 staff on research-only contracts (comprised of 72 Research Assistants, 56 Research Fellows, 43 Senior Research Fellows, 21 Principal Research Fellows and 1 senior manager). Seventy of our staff on research contracts are fixed term (36%). Early Career Researchers (ECRs) include our Research Assistants and Research Fellows (128 headcount); however, to support inclusivity in line with our Hallam Values, we support a wider, self-identification of ECR status, recognising the range of career paths at our institution including those followed by colleagues who join Sheffield Hallam from professional practice and industry. Our **secondary audience** includes our remaining academic population who may be working towards gaining SRR and our 681 postgraduate students.

**Internal Evaluation**

Internal evaluation was undertaken by the Researcher Concordat Operations Group (RCOG) led by the Director of the Doctoral School. Evaluation was undertaken through four primary mechanisms as described below – in each case, results and outcomes were reviewed by RCOG against our Concordat Action Plan. Findings informed our forward Action Plan.

1. **Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS):** Analysis of the 2021 CEDARS survey was undertaken to understand areas of strength and identify areas where we wish to improve. Outcomes were considered by RCOG and shared widely through, inter alia, the University’s Research and Innovation Committee (RIC), Research Leadership Group (RLG), and working groups of RLG leading on specific areas of research culture. 136 researchers (21% of our primary audience) responded to the survey, across all career stages. Response rates were lower than target, but not unexpectedly given the timing of the survey relative to staff transition back to campus following the pandemic. 46 respondents were ECRs, providing good representation (36%) of this community.
2. **University-wide staff surveys:** Regular surveys are important for staff engagement; results and outcomes feed into working groups for the Concordat, Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter, ensuring joined up understanding of staff lived experiences. Two all staff ‘pulse’ surveys (April 2021, May 2022) gathered staff views on a) remote working during the pandemic, to inform future policy on hybrid working, b) working environment including management support, and c) wellbeing. Response rates were 43% and 38% for research staff and 54% and 49% for academic staff on a teaching and research contract. An Athena SWAN pulse survey (September 2022) sought views on gender equality in relation to promotion and progression, mitigation against the pandemic, and flexible working. Response rates were 20-22% across the academic and research community.
3. **Feedback on Concordat Priorities:** Surveys were undertaken (October 2022) to seek direct feedback from researchers, managers of researchers and research leaders on aspects of research culture that were aligned to our Concordat Action Plan to gain insights on engagement with the Concordat, progress and barriers to success, and priorities of these groups to help inform the future action plan. 54 responses were received.
4. **Researcher staff groups:** RCOG has both senior and early career researcher representation, reflecting constituent academic disciplines and communities across Sheffield Hallam. Representatives raise the visibility of the Concordat and champion its principles and ensure that researchers are formally represented in developing and monitoring organisational efforts to implement the Concordat principles and our Action Plan. ECR representatives help act as a conduit between our ECR Network and RCOG ensuring their voice is heard.
5. **Gender Equality:** We reviewed institutional support for gender and drew together a Gender Equality Plan to inform our actions linking clearly to the Concordat and Athens SWAN.

Outcomes from these above engagement mechanisms are highlighted in the sections below.

**Governance Structures**

Oversight, monitoring and reporting of the Concordat Action Plan and the HR Excellence in Research Award is provided by RCOG. RCOG reports annually to the Research and Innovation Committee (RIC) chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor; RIC approves all research policies and frameworks within our governance structure. Annual reports are recommended by RIC to the Board of Governors, raising the profile of activities. In parallel, RCOG provides regular operational reports and makes recommendations to the Research Leadership Group (RLG), Chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation; RLG oversees University research and innovation strategy and associated delivery. Responsibility for Concordat actions primarily rests with RLG, supported by Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD), and Research and Innovation Services (RIS).

RCOG meets three times a year, with additional sub-group meetings as required. Members champion the Concordat and its related initiatives, and they facilitate two-way communication between RCOG and the staff groups they represent. RCOG includes senior researcher representatives from our three Colleges and ECR representatives from each of our four Research Institutes, along with representatives from central directorates – HROD and RIS. RCOG has overlapping membership within the formal governance structure of the University and with other operations groups that support frameworks and charters that intersect with the Concordat. The chair of RCOG is a member of RIC and RLG and our researcher representatives sit on College and Research Institute Senior Leadership Boards, thereby ensuring strategy and policy connectivity. Members of RCOG lead our institutional commitments to the Research Integrity Concordat and provide support to the Athena SWAN Steering Group, facilitating the exchange of information and ideas through multi-purpose surveys, shared data and alignment of action plans. There is not sufficient cross-cutting activity with the Race Equality Charter, and this is an area for future improvement.

**Past Progress and Achievements**

**Environment and Culture**

Our **REF 2021 results** provided a rich demonstration of how our research transforms lives. We grew our research significantly, returning 500 staff - double the previous submission, and we increased quality with 24% of our research judged to be world leading (up from 18%). We are especially proud of our [inclusive return](https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/research-excellence-framework/equality-impact-assessment) which was representative of staff gender and ethnicity profiles with 47% female staff and 15% people from an ethnic minority background (up from 41% and 8%). 65% of researchers agreed/agreed strongly that they are treated fairly for inclusion in the REF – this was more positive than the sector average (CEDARS 2021). Connected to the publication of REF 2021 results, the **Annual Research Review** is in progress and will help inform plans and initiatives to support researchers as part of our new research strategy. Our Policy Impact and Performance Team have held 14 open sessions for all disciplinary areas (>200 academics in attendance) to discuss and shape institutional expectations for the research environment and culture – recommendations and outcomes will be reported in Spring 2023 (ECI6).

In 2021 we refreshed our **Equality Objectives** and launched our **Hallam Values** (ambition, collaboration, inclusion, innovation, and integrity) to reflect our enhanced commitment to EDI. Values were developed by staff from across the University. An implementation plan sets out to embed these Values so that they are integral to institutional culture and behaviours. However, we recognise that inequalities exist (65% of staff agree the institution is committed to Equality and Diversity - CEDARS 2021) and we are making cultural and systemic changes to make a difference including the strengthening and visibility of EDI leadership and governance through 15 **University Leadership Team EDI Champions**. These include the PVC Research and Innovation and the Dean of Research who are EDI Champions for Race and Gender, respectively, providing visible and active role models to support and advance EDI for staff and students but notably the research community (ECI3). In response to our internal staff surveys and CEDARS feedback on the importance of a positive working environment and inclusive culture, a network of 40 **‘Inclusive Hallam Champions’** have been recruited to listen to staff concerns, signpost appropriate support and feedback ideas and issues to relevant channels (ECI3).

**Employment**

Our **Early Career Research and Innovation Fellowship** (ECRIF) scheme was launched in 2021 to help establish the research and innovation portfolio of those at an early career stage and who have potential to be a future independent researcher or who had been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (PCDI4, ECI2). Applications from under-represented groups, including females and members of minority groups were encouraged. In Cohort 1 (2021), 32 ECRIFs were awarded from 92 applicants. Females represented 55% of awards; there was high engagement from BAME applicants (27%) but fewer awards for this group (12%). Important learning points were:

* Targeting females and minority groups had a positive impact; drop-in sessions and workshops were well received and raised confidence to apply.
* Greater mentoring/support were required clarifying scheme aims and evaluation criteria.

For Cohort 2 (AY 2022) the process was refined to include a two-stage application where mentoring and development support were identified at an early stage (PCDI3). 16 ECRIFs were awarded from 61 applicants – significantly, 61% of award holders were female and 25% awardees were from a minority ethnic group.

Mid-term evaluation of Cohort 1 (via survey and focus group) is informing the mentoring and development programme for Cohort 2. Experiences were overwhelmingly positive:

* “*It’s been really good...the biggest benefit is the headspace and time for reflection and conversation....and the boost from the recognition from the university”*
* *“This has been the best year in terms of career progression...this has enabled meaningful connections with colleagues”*
* *“I found it indescribably helpful to have a mentor who is familiar with the challenges of part-time work – this has also been crucial in considering career opportunities”*

CEDARS (2021) revealed that only 33% of our researchers agree that there are equitable opportunities for career progression; ECRs were less likely to believe that promotion and progression are fair. We will evaluate the ECRIF scheme to understand its impact on ECRs.

**Professional Development**

In February 2021 we launched our **Research and Innovation Development Conversations** leading to stronger connections between researchers and professional services support. 153 researchers (including our ECRIFs) participated in an individual one-hour interview with members of RIS, providing researchers with the opportunity to discuss their ambitions and associated challenges. Outcomes included a greater understanding of support needs to inform training and development provision, and an understanding of researchers’ plans to enable focused support for grant bidding activity. (ECI6, PCDI3, PCDI4). It also helped improve connectivity during the pandemic. New workshops have been delivered on fellowships, careers, generating impact, and grant writing. Furthermore, increased use of online provision has improved accessibility (ECI2, PCDI3).

**Leadership development** was prioritised, and a review of our training offer was conducted. We piloted the implementation of new management and leadership development modules. Alongside this, the second cohort of our ‘Leading into the Future’ programme was launched (February 2022) to support aspiring leaders from under-represented groups including racially minoritised staff, women, LGBTQ+ staff and staff with disabilities. These two schemes are available to all academic staff; however, our researchers also have exclusive access to a new online programme to support early and middle career researchers to take a strategic and reflective approach to career management. Six of our academic research leads participated in the external development group for this programme, produced by Epigeum. This will be rolled out to cohort 1 and 2 of our ECRIFs in 2023 (EI4, PCDI3).

**Strategic Objectives and Implementation**

Our new research and innovation strategy focuses on four strategic priorities: **Capacity, Capability, Connectivity, and Culture**, within the context of an overarching outcome: *A cadre of skilled people equipped to upskill others to grow and expand benefits from sustainable research and innovation to all.*

Key to our ambitions is that we ensure we support all of our academics to realise their full potential as researchers, innovators, collaborators, and influencers – this is underpinned through our commitment to the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and as a holder of the HR Excellence in Research Award. The strategy is led by RLG and informed by RCOG using intelligence from the research community and staff surveys. CEDARS has identified specific challenges where we wish to improve staff experiences across the Concordat domains. Specifically, to ensure equitable opportunity for career progression; provide enhanced professional development support; and promote wider engagement within our research ecosystem. Our forward action-plan provides our detailed approach, priority areas are highlighted below.

**Environment and Culture**

**Expand our ethics reviewer pool:** Aligned to our commitment to research integrity we will expand our pool of ethics reviewers. Currently, the pool is small and imbalanced in terms of engagement - we aim to achieve a fairer division of work, richer reviews, and an enhanced research culture. All staff with SRR will be expected to undertake this role. We will double our pool from 250 to over 500 active researchers. ECRs and our doctoral researchers (second year onwards) will also be encouraged to be reviewers as a development activity, gained through supported experiential learning (target 50 ECRs) and annual training (ECM2).

**Sheffield Hallam Research and Innovation Investment funds (SHRIF):** SHRIF will be launched in February 2023. It aims to support inclusive and impactful research and innovation activities towards growth & sustainability driving a vibrant and sustainable ecosystem. SHRIF will support activity across a framework of five interconnected priorities and will be inclusive of all researchers, regardless of experience and contract type. We will launch three calls per annum, embed narrative CVs in the process and will use our learning from REF and our ECRIF scheme to embed EDI, with a target of 50% female researcher engagement and 15% of researchers from a minority background (PCDI4). Researchers will participate in the development of the scheme to address issues of inclusion providing opportunity for researchers to be involved in policy making (ECM5).

**Employment**

**Early Career Research and Innovation Fellowships:** We will implement a revised fellowship programme for cohort 2 of our ECRIFs ensuring: a) a sustained programme of mentoring and development sessions throughout the year (minimum 4 sessions); b) networking space for the ECRIFs to lead and self-manage their engagement as a cohort (minimum 4 sessions) and c) undertake an end-of programme review for cohort 1 and 2 ensuring learning and experience is fed into any future programmes (response rate of 80%) (PCDI3).

**Narrative CVs:** To advance our commitment to responsible research metrics we will embrace narrative CVs (R4R). We will launch a programme of engagement in 2023 for those preparing/reviewing narrative CVs and will integrate this as standard in all our internal funding mechanisms (i.e., SHRIF). We will evaluate this approach to understand a) effectiveness of the CV format and b) impact on outcomes. Longer-term, learning will feed into internal academic progression pathways to address concerns of equality and merit-based progression (EI1, EI3, EM3).

**Professional Development**

**Development**: We will launch a Researcher and Innovator Development Academy to bring together development across all careers. We have identified a need to enhance our research culture to support researchers to engage in CPD and develop new provision which supports career transitions. We have an opportunity to actively challenge systemic issues to overcome and reduce harmful cultures and working practices (ECI2; ECI3). CEDARS (2021) suggests that only 15% of researchers spent 10 or more days on CPD; our Athena SWAN survey suggests only average scores for researchers feeling confident that the University had taken action to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and that decisions on progression are made fairly; R&I development conversations with researchers have identified specific development needs around leadership, policy, collaborations, and income generation. Immediate actions are to a) recruit a leadership post to head up the Academy and develop a 3-5 year delivery plan; b) ensure two signature programmes are delivered including our ECRIFs (see above) and a rationalised programme of development opportunities which focuses on a balanced portfolio against the Vitae RDF.

Contact: Elizabeth Scanlon, Research and Innovation Services (version 1: 26/01/2023)