

Annual report on progress April 2021 - March 2022

Overview

The [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) is an agreement between the funders and employers of researchers in the UK to improve employment and support for researchers and researcher careers. The Concordat was first established in 2008 and significantly revised in 2019, with three core principles covering (i) Environment and culture; (ii) Employment; and (iii) Professional and career development. Sheffield Hallam University became a signatory to the revised Concordat in April 2021 following endorsement by University Leadership Team.

The European Commission agreed that by an institution endorsing the principles of the Concordat, along with meeting the requirements of the QAA Quality Code for research degrees, it is equivalent to adopting the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. A UK-wide process, managed by Vitae, enables institutions who can demonstrate alignment with the Researcher Concordat to apply for the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR). Sheffield Hallam has held the HREiR award since January 2013 and successfully retained the award at the eight-year external review (submitted in January 2021, confirmed in April 2021).

The HREiR action plan underpins our work in implementing the Concordat's principles at Sheffield Hallam. Our HREiR documents and action plan are publicly available at <https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/researcher-concordat>.

This report provides an overview of our progress towards implementing our action plan over the past 12 months. It has been endorsed by Research and Innovation Committee (March 2022) and Academic Board (April 2022). It will be made publicly available via the above link.

HREiR strategic objectives

Our strategic priorities for January 2021 onwards, as identified in our HREiR 8-year report, are:

Policy and strategy

- To continue to embed Research Institute plans and activities to support research culture, and communicate institutional expectations for research environment, culture and leadership.
- Review staff feedback and lessons learned during the pandemic to inform future policies on and approaches to working practices and flexible working. For researchers in particular, capture and share examples of best practice and positive outcomes from remote research and adjusted designs.
- Implement a holistic review of research performance, to include a suite of measures across four core strands including people, sustainability, quality and impact which will underpin new annual research reviews and help inform plans and initiatives to support researchers.

Developing our staff

- To implement the researcher review leading to stronger connections between active researchers, better aligned professional services support for researchers and the development of strategic funding proposals.
- To continue actions to reduce the under-representation of female and BAME staff in Associate Professor/Professor roles, research grant applications and REF. Implement actions

to address concerns around the long-term impact of COVID-19 on research activity/outputs and the differential impacts on female researchers.

- To implement a fellowship scheme for ECRs to support them to establish their R&I portfolio, including consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and of under-represented groups.

Collaboration and Community

- To roll out and embed our institutional 'Hallam Values' so that they are integral to institutional culture and behaviours.
- Initiatives to respond to staff survey feedback on the importance of a positive working environment and inclusive culture, we will recruit a network of 'Inclusive Hallam' Champions to listen to staff concerns, signpost appropriate support and feedback ideas and issues to relevant channels.
- Continue efforts to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, remote working and isolation on wellbeing, engagement, morale and motivation for researchers, particularly ECRs and PGRs where the impacts may be greater. Implement longer-term actions to mitigate the impacts on research/researchers of the increased time allocated to teaching during the pandemic.

Progress in implementing the action plan

Cross references to the HREiR action plan are given in brackets.

Policy and Strategy

- The Research Institute Leadership Groups are driving local implementation plans with a focus on the research environment, including seminar series, sandpit events, dialogue events, mentoring programmes and communities of practice. (ECI6)
- Two staff 'pulse' surveys have gathered staff views on remote working and challenges faced during the pandemic to inform the policy and approach on hybrid working. The Our People group, comprising colleagues from Research and Innovation Services (RIS); Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD); and Academic Development and Diversity (ADD), is taking forward our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) priorities with respect to researchers, starting with a shared priority on gender.
- The Annual Research Review is currently in progress and will help inform plans and initiatives to support researchers. The Policy Impact and Performance (PIP) team are running open sessions for all disciplinary areas, connected to the publication of REF 2021 results (in May 2022), to discuss and shape institutional expectations for the research environment and culture.

Developing our staff

- The HROD system has been developed to enable staff to keep a record of their professional development. This supports an evidence base for the Concordat requirement that researchers are supported to engage in a minimum of 10 days' professional development pro rata per year. As agreed by Research Leadership Group, reporting will be limited to the staff who are the main focus of the Researcher Concordat - staff employed at Hallam specifically to conduct research. It is acknowledged that engagement with this CPD recording may be more challenging to achieve, and this will be reviewed after the 2022 appraisal round. Guidance is being communicated to researchers and their managers via the Colleges, with messaging being supported by RCOG members. (PCDI1, PCDI6)

Sheffield Hallam University's Commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

- Research leads participated in the external development group for an online programme to support early and middle career researchers to take a strategic and reflective approach to career management (including modules on actively managing a research career, leadership and management). The programme is produced by Epigeum and will be rolled out from May 2022. (EI4, PCDI3)
- The Early Career Research and Innovation Fellowship Scheme was launched in 2021 to assist those at a relatively early stage of their research career to establish their research and innovation portfolio and/or develop a new research area or collaboration. An EDI analysis of applications and awards has been conducted and will inform the process for future rounds of the scheme. (ECI2)
- Development sessions for ECRs, supported by an external provider, have included New Investigator Awards, Fellowships, How to develop a research career, An overview of Horizon Europe, An introduction to knowledge exchange support at SHU. Online delivery of training and development events has led to many being recorded and made available to people unable to attend the session, thereby improving accessibility. (ECI2, PCDI3)
- 153 researchers participated in the Research and Innovation Development Programme between Feb – July 2021. A one-hour, 1-1 interview with a member of the RIS research/innovation funding teams provided researchers with an opportunity to discuss their personal research aims, ambitions and associated challenges. This provided a greater understanding of researchers' support needs to inform staff training and development provision, and a better understanding of individual researchers' plans which can be used to support the development of strategic bids across the Institutes. (ECI6, PCDI3, PCDI4).

Collaboration and Community

- The Research and Innovation bulletin was launched in January 2022 - a monthly email digest containing key updates and information relevant to the R&I community. Additionally, internal staff intranet/ sharepoint sites now advertise research seminars and related events. Other University-wide community-building activities include the annual Research and Innovation Conference and the Innovation Festival (both June 2021). (PCDI5)
- Not focused specifically on researchers, a full review of the leadership and development training offer at SHU has been conducted, and new management and leadership development modules piloted for 2022 implementation. Alongside this, the Leading into the Future programme supports aspiring leaders from under-represented groups (racially minoritised staff, women, LGBTQ+ staff, staff with disabilities); cohort 2 launched in February 2022. (EI4)
- Related activities are ongoing as part of broader EDI activities including the Inclusive Hallam series of events; embedding of the Hallam Values; Inclusive Hallam Champions from across the University; EDI Champions from the extended University Leadership Team; and departmental EDI leads. The Protect and Respect programme is currently being rolled out to all staff, including modules on 'Being an Active Bystander' and 'Responding to Disclosures'. (ECI3, ECI4)

Staff engagement

A number of mechanisms have been used to gather the views of researchers and raise awareness of the Concordat's principles:

Sheffield Hallam University’s Commitment to
the Concordat to Support the Career
Development of Researchers

- We participated in the Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers Survey (CEDARS) in June 2021, which asks researchers for views on their experience across a number of areas. CEDARS results were presented to Research Leadership Group (RLG) in November 2021. (EC16)
- A week-long focus in We Are Hallam (all-staff email bulletin) was used to publicise our commitment to the Researcher Concordat, and to promote the ECR network and CEDARS (EC1)
- The Researcher Concordat Operations Group (RCOG) includes a senior researcher representative for each of the Colleges and early career researcher representatives for each of the Research Institutes. These representatives are asked to feed back to (and from) the relevant College or Research Institute committees. RCOG is chaired by Professor Doug Cleaver and also includes professional services representation from RIS, HROD and ADD.
- We maintain a dedicated page on the University’s website (EC1)
<https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity/researcher-concordat>
- For staff who support researchers (Research and Innovation Services, RIS), we include information in our RIS new starters guide and presented the Concordat’s principles at the RIS Open Forum (December 2021)

Success measures

The table below indicates some relevant success measures and progress to date. Further actions and measures for subsequent years are outlined in the full action plan.

Strategic objective	Success measure	Progress
Policy and strategy		
To continue to embed Research Institute plans and activities to support research culture, and communicate institutional expectations for research environment, culture and leadership.	<p>CEDARS responses in relation to recruitment processes and manager confidence in using inclusive recruitment processes (Q19 on experience of recruitment for new starters and Q25 on manager confidence).</p> <p>CEDARS / Staff survey responses in relation to (i) value of induction and (ii) integration into local/University research community.</p> <p>New staff intranet site for Research and Innovation Services enables staff to find information on policies and practices relevant to</p>	<p>CEDARS 2021 Q19 new starters agree their recruitment was fair (88% vs 86% sector), inclusive (81% vs 78% sector), transparent (81% vs 77% sector) and merit-based (85% vs 84% sector). Q28 85% of managers are confident/very confident in using inclusive, equitable and transparent recruitment processes (91% sector).</p> <p>Q21 69% found local induction useful (62% for dept/unit and 50% for institution level).</p> <p>Q43 65% feel included in their immediate research environment/group (74% sector). This is lower for established researchers (53%) and ECRs (59%).</p>

	<p>their position, and relevant staff development opportunities. Effectiveness measured via an increase in the number of hits on the site and the % of staff recognising it as a source of relevant information via an institutional Q in CEDARS.</p>	<p>Q48 29% agreed that they receive information about research-related activities, opportunities and policies via the Research and Innovation Staff Intranet sites. This is currently much lower than via Research Centre/Department communications (66%) and Head of Research Centre/Department (55%) indicating a reliance on local comms.</p>
<p>Review staff feedback and lessons learned during the pandemic to inform future policies on and approaches to working practices and flexible working. For researchers in particular, capture and share examples of best practice and positive outcomes from remote research and adjusted designs.</p>	<p>Review of lessons learned completed and findings used to inform future policy and practice on flexible working.</p>	<p>The extent to which respondents believe they are treated fairly with respect to flexible working requests is in line with the sector average (71% agree/strongly agree compared to 74% for the sector, measured via CEDARS 2021).</p>
<p>Implement a holistic review of research performance, to include a suite of measures across four core strands including people, sustainability, quality and impact which will underpin new annual research reviews and help inform plans and initiatives to support researchers.</p>	<p>CEDARS responses to Q16 on how contributions to institutional policy and decision-making are valued and Q34, % of staff who have engaged with it compared to those who would like to. Establish baseline in 2021 and improve upon that in 2023.</p>	<p>55% agree their contributions to institutional policy and decision-making are valued, at least to some degree. Only 12% have participated in institution policy and decision-making, 50% would like to.</p> <p>There is an opportunity here to involve more researchers in institutional policy and decision-making, making sure that their contributions are valued (measured via CEDARS 2021).</p>
<p>Developing our staff</p>		
<p>To implement the researcher review leading to stronger connections between active researchers, better aligned professional services support for researchers and the development of strategic funding proposals.</p>	<p>Number of staff engaging in the researcher review. Target: 80.</p>	<p>153 one-to-one interviews were conducted from Feb-July 2021 as part of the annual researcher review (also referred to as the Research and Innovation Development Programme, RIDP).</p>

<p>To continue actions to reduce the under-representation of female and BAME staff in Associate Professor/Professor roles, research grant applications and REF. Implement actions to address concerns around the long-term impact of COVID-19 on research activity/outputs and the differential impacts on female researchers.</p>	<p>CEDARS responses regarding researcher perceptions of fair treatment and opportunities for promotion and progression.</p>	<p>Q15 39% agree/strongly agree they are treated fairly in relation to contracted workload (47% sector) and 33% for the allocation of additional work beyond this (38% sector). 47% of all staff respondents and 32% of ECRs agree/strongly agree they are treated fairly in relation to promotion/progression opportunities (48% sector, 25% in CROS 2019).</p> <p>Q18 30% (43% sector) agree/strongly agree promotions are made on merit, 33% (43% sector) agree/strongly agree there are equitable opportunities for career progression.</p> <p>Potential issues have been identified in relation to the perception that (i) promotions are made on merit; (ii) equitable opportunities for career progression exist; and (iii) ECRs are treated fairly in relation to promotion/progression.</p>
<p>To implement a fellowship scheme for ECRs to support them to establish their R&I portfolio, including consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and of under-represented groups.</p>	<p>Internal call criteria reflect a commitment to providing researchers with opportunities to develop their research identity and skills.</p> <p>Measured via CEDARS Q30. Disaggregate responses to identify potential subgroups with less time to focus on research identity and leadership skills.</p>	<p>33 Early Career Research & Innovation fellowships were awarded for the 2020/21 academic year (from 92 applicants). Fellows are distributed across the Colleges/Research Institutes and 55% of award holders are female.</p> <p>CEDARS 2021 Q31 34% have time to develop their research identity (43% sector) and 30% have time to develop their leadership skills (41% sector). Agreement is lower for established researchers; 20% have time to develop their research identity and 20% have time to develop their leadership skills.</p>

Collaboration and Community		
<p>To roll out and embed our institutional ‘Hallam Values’ so that they are integral to institutional culture and behaviours.</p>	<p>CEDARS responses regarding researcher perceptions of fair treatment and commitment to Equality and Diversity. Maintaining or increasing above 70% agreement that the institution is committed to Equality and Diversity</p>	<p>CEDARS 2021 Q42 65% agree the institution is committed to equality and diversity (77% sector, 71% CROS 2019, 70% PIRLS 2019)</p> <p>Q15 perceptions of fair treatment range from 33% for allocation of additional work to 72% for access to training and funding for conferences. The % agreement was below the sector for salary and benefits (55% compared to 63% for the sector) and contracted workload (35% compared to 47% for the sector).</p>
<p>Initiatives to respond to staff survey feedback on the importance of a positive working environment and inclusive culture, we will recruit a network of ‘Inclusive Hallam’ Champions to listen to staff concerns, signpost appropriate support and feedback ideas and issues to relevant channels.</p>	<p>CEDARS 2021 used to establish a baseline for relevant measures and to identify issues around the experience and reporting of discrimination or bullying and harassment. Target: improvements measured via CEDARS 2023, in line with the sector.</p>	<p>24% of Hallam respondents said they have felt personally discriminated against whilst at work (compared to the sector average of 19%) but only 8% have reported any incidents of discrimination to them or somebody else. A similar percentage (23%) of Hallam respondents said they have felt bullied or harassed but the level of reporting is higher at 16%. Incidents of research misconduct are lower at 12% and reporting proportionately higher at 10%. A higher proportion of Hallam staff would feel comfortable reporting incidents of research misconduct (73%) compared to the sector (66%) and compared to incidents of bullying/harassment (53%) and discrimination (52%).</p> <p>Q28 63% of managers are confident/fully confident in responding to issues relating to bullying and harassment (81% sector)</p> <p>Issues identified in relation to (i) the level of comfort in reporting</p>

		<p>incidents of discrimination and bullying/harassment, (ii) trust this would be investigated fairly and (iii) above sector average personal experience of both.</p> <p>Manager confidence in responding to issues relating to bullying and harassment requires improvement.</p>
<p>Continue efforts to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, remote working and isolation on wellbeing, engagement, morale and motivation for researchers, particularly ECRs and PGRs where the impacts may be greater. Implement longer-term actions to mitigate the impacts on research/researchers of the increased time allocated to teaching during the pandemic.</p>	<p>Staff survey results for wellbeing-related question and measures of a healthy working environment.</p> <p>An increase in the % of respondents who consider Hallam an attractive place to progress their research career (as measured by CEDARS 2021).</p>	<p>Q42 59% agree the institution actively promotes the importance of good mental health and wellbeing of staff (65% sector), 38% agree their working environment supports their mental health and wellbeing (48% sector).</p> <p>Q28 83% of managers are confident/fully confident in responding to issues relating to health and wellbeing.</p> <p>54% consider Hallam an attractive place to progress their research career (41% CROS 2019, 40% PIRLS 2019).</p>