

## Context

Sheffield Hallam University's (SHU) vision is to be the world's leading applied university, achieving outstanding outcomes for our students and our city, and showing the world what a university genuinely focused on transforming lives can achieve. Our Creating Knowledge (research and innovation) strategic goal is for our research and partnerships to provide innovative, practical solutions to real-world challenge. Our three research and impact platforms are aligned to our strategic priorities and UKRI grand challenges, and provide a focus for internal and external collaboration.

A new Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation was appointed in March 2020. During 2019, our academic delivery was restructured from 4 faculties to 3 colleges. In January 2020 we launched four interdisciplinary Research Institutes to sit alongside the colleges and support the delivery of our research strategy and the University's research and impact platforms. The Institutes provide leadership of established and emerging areas of excellence to build capacity, grow research income and enhance external reputation, and support the development of a strong academic culture throughout the University. The four institutes are: • Culture and Creativity • Health • Industry and Innovation • Social and Economic. In Autumn 2019, all Professional Services support for research and innovation was consolidated under the University's Research and Innovation Services, thereby ensuring a consistent and coordinated service across the Research Institutes and central team.

SHU is one of the UK's largest universities, with around 4500 staff and 32,000 students. Of our 1614 academic staff (by headcount, excluding Associate Lecturers who do not have research as part of their employment contract) the majority (1430, 88.5%) are involved in both teaching and research. Academic staff on research-only contracts (184, 11.4%) are typically based in Research Centres and undertake full-time research. Of the above academic staff (1614), 89.7% (1447) are on permanent contracts. Of those staff on research-only contracts (184), 63% (116) are on permanent contracts. 500 of our academic staff are classed as having "significant responsibility for research" for REF2021 purposes, double the submission size in REF 2014. We have a diverse pool of academics engaged in research - from staff recruited from external professions with little research expertise, through to active senior researchers. This means our target audience for the Concordat is broad, and therefore our approach is to support academic careers through enhancing the quality and impact of individuals' research. This diversity also means we adopt a flexible definition of Early Career Researcher (ECR) at SHU - our ECRs can be established academics who would not consider themselves 'early career' yet may still be relatively new to research.

Since 2019, staff with significant responsibility for research have at least 20% of their work time allocated to research and impact activities in line with agreed research plans as established via our REF Code of Practice, providing consistency of approach across the University.

## Internal Review Process

Oversight, monitoring, review and reporting of the University's Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers Action Plan and the HR Excellence in Research Award is provided by the Researcher Concordat Operations Group (RCOG). RCOG reports to the Chair of the University's Creating Knowledge Board (CKB) and meets three times a year, with additional sub-group meetings as required. Members are asked to facilitate 2-way feedback and communication between RCOG and the staff groups they are representing. RCOG has included senior researcher representation since its inception (2012) and ECR representation since 2016. Membership was refreshed in 2020 to align with the new academic structures, and has senior representation from each of our Colleges and Early Career Researcher (ECR) representation from each of our Research Institutes, along with representatives from central directorates – Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD), Research and Innovation Services (RIS) and Academic Development and Diversity (ADD). The current RCOG chair took over in January 2019 and is a member of CKB. There is

also overlapping membership of RCOG with college/department research committees, Research Institute leadership boards, the University Athena SWAN Group, REF Management Group and Research Ethics Committee to ensure initiatives and actions plans are joined up. RCOG members contributed to the review of progress and our priorities for the new action plan.

Outside of RCOG meetings, researchers' views were formally captured through staff surveys, focus groups and the ECR network. We participated in the 2019 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigator and Researcher Leader Survey (PIRLS). We also have an internal Staff Engagement Survey; a full survey was run in March-April 2019, followed by shorter 'pulse' surveys in April and October 2020 which looked at staff experiences of home working during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the Concordat, we have challenges in drawing meaningful conclusions from these surveys – CROS and PIRLS because the number of responses were low (111 for CROS and 69 for PIRLS which, although an increase on previous years, only represents an estimated 37% and 29% of the eligible pool respectively) and the Staff Engagement Survey because it is not possible to disaggregate the academic staff data into those who are/are not active researchers. Response rates for the full Staff Engagement Survey in April 2019 were 56% for academics on 'research and teaching' contracts and 47% for staff on research contracts. However, all surveys have provided useful information and future priorities are (i) to achieve a more representative response rate for the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) in 2021, and (ii) to be able to disaggregate and report on responses to our internal staff survey from research-active staff, using our new SRR designation from REF. A series of focus groups were run with research and PGR staff leads to understand the impact that remote working, and the transition to on-campus working, has had on researchers (late 2020). The focus groups identified impacts from the COVID-19 disruption across all staff, but it has been particularly challenging for ECRs and PGRs.

We have communicated progress against the Concordat principles via different routes depending on the activity. The results of, and actions from, the internal staff surveys have been communicated via all-staff briefings, email and the staff intranet. A monthly "Managers' Brief" newsletter is emailed to all line managers and contains information on responsibilities and changes to HROD policies and processes. During the pandemic, regular all-staff communications have focused on supporting home-working and staff wellbeing, as well as information on the University's Covid response. Updates on research strategy and related activities are cascaded via Research Leadership Group and the "Academic Digest" email to all academic staff. Feedback and actions arising from staff surveys and internal data analyses (e.g., EIA relating to research funding and REF) have informed development of our research priorities and 2021 Concordat action plan. We also invited feedback and comments on priorities for the 2021 action plan through RCOG, and plans were subsequently approved by Research Leadership Group and HROD Executive Group.

The gap analysis against the new Researcher Concordat was carried out by a sub-group of RCOG, comprising representatives from RIS and HROD.

### Achievements and Progress

Our Concordat strategy at our last external review, in 2017, outlined a focus on initiatives and actions to enhance researcher careers and performance, and thereby staff satisfaction and the quality of our research. In our 2019 two-year review, our Concordat activities centered on research community and culture, support for researchers, and networking and collaboration opportunities. Staff recruitment and development priorities were to build research capacity and capability, and support the development of academic research careers from ECRs through to Professors.

The full details of activities and progress against our 2019 action plan can be found [on our website](#). The review details progress against each action and summarises feedback gathered through staff surveys. As a high-level summary, we have:

- Continued to strengthen our recruitment and selection policies and guidance to ensure EDI principles underpin our approaches and decision-making. Introduced guidance for academic recruitment that all senior/lecturers are expected to engage in research and scholarly activity and must be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, experience and aspirations in this area. [Principle 1]
- Begun work to develop our institutional “Hallam Values”, to provide a common set of organisational values to help progress our strategy. this involved around 500 staff, students and alumni [Principle 2]
- Consulted, revised and embedded the Academic Careers Framework to support career progression, and introduced a University-wide process for progression to Associate Professor and Professor. This includes clear research and innovation pathways that embed, for the first time, impact in career progression [Principle 2, 5]
- Introduced new development offers for academic staff to support research and leadership capability and academic careers, including the Hallam Academic Programme, enhanced Induction resources, and leadership development initiatives [Principle 3,4]
- Continued to invest internal strategic funding to support researchers at all stages of their career, with a particular focus on ECRs. Introduced new interdisciplinary Research Institutes to promote and facilitate interdisciplinary responses to key global challenges. Data show an overall growth in research activity and engagement across the REF period: REF 2021 will submit 500 staff compared with 249 staff (headcount) in REF 2014, a doubling of our submission size. [Principle 2, 3, 4]
- Implemented actions in response to identified areas of under-representation in research activities. [Principle 6]
- Introduced a requirement for all new and revised policies and processes to have an Equality Impact Analysis [Principle 6]

Since March 2019, much of our activity has involved responding to the Covid pandemic and the consequent impact on our students, staff and research. Academic workplans needed to recognise the increased demands on staff who had to create and deliver online teaching and assessment. Campus research facilities were closed for several months and many staff had additional personal/caring responsibilities during the lockdowns. In response, we have introduced schemes for additional time and bursary extensions for our postgraduate research students, as well as expectations for remote supervisory meetings. We introduced new IT systems and processes to support home-working, and increased communication of the resources available to support wellbeing. Two staff surveys have captured the views of staff in relation to homeworking and the support provided by their managers. Research Institute Directors are leading work to understand the impact of the pandemic on our researchers, and to identify any groups who have been disproportionately affected.

### Strategy and actions from 2021 onwards

Our Concordat action plan supports the ambitions of our Research and Innovation strategy to deliver: • a strong research and innovation culture that delivers excellent REF and KEF performance; • sustainable growth of research and innovation income; • research with economic, social and cultural impact.

The full details of planned actions and success measures can be found in our new action plan, mapped to the 2018 Researcher Concordat, [on our website](#).

Our Research and Innovation strategy aims to: • recruit, retain and reward research excellence, embedding EDI; • promote an open, strong and confident research culture; • build networks to leverage large-scale grants and awards and interdisciplinary responses to key global challenges. This will be achieved through a range of interventions including events to support identification of intellectual challenges and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations, a further focus on ECRs and the ECR Network, and activities to grow external/industry engagement with our research.

The new Research Institutes will be the primary mechanism for this activity, working in collaboration with the Colleges to produce an uplift in the quality, scale and impact of our research and innovation.

Alongside this, our University strategy aims to create an outstanding environment in which to study, research and work. These principles underpin our approaches to staff recruitment and retention, and place EDI as a key enabler of our strategy.

Priorities over the next four years are focused on the following clusters:

#### *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 Research and Innovation Development Programme, 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. – also add to the action plan
- 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.

The Research Institutes will be the drivers for our strategy, building networks and supporting researchers. Our strategic success measures will consider staff satisfaction feedback; research, capacity, capability and performance; and knowledge exchange capacity, capability and performance.

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