University of Huddersfield

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

HR Excellence in Research Award:

Eight Year Review 2019 – Revised resubmission (December 2020)

<https://staff.hud.ac.uk/hr/hr-excellence-in-research>

## Process – Evaluation and Governance

The University of Huddersfield first applied successfully for the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2011 and has achieved renewal at subsequent reviews (2013, 2015, and 2017). The University Research Careers and Engagement Oversight Group (URCEOG) meets quarterly to oversee the implementation of the Concordat and review progress. URCEOG includes representation from Research & Enterprise (R&E), Human Resources (including Staff Development), representatives from the seven Schools, and Postgraduate Researchers, Research Fellows, and now early career researchers. URCEOG currently reports quarterly to the University Research Committee on progress with the Action Plan. Since URCEOG was formed in in 2017, active engagement has improved significantly. Progress on actions is reviewed regularly and changes reflected in a working version of the Action Plan. Survey data from the Quality of Working Life Surveys 2015, 2017 and 2019; CROS and PIRLS 2015, 2017, and 2019 (which had an improved response rate for both combined of 28%) feed into the process. In 2018, an innovative Institutional Survey (IS) of researchers was developed, combining areas in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), CROS, and PIRLS. The IS was sent to postgraduate researchers and all research and academic staff and had a 50% response rate. This was followed by focus groups in 2019 covering: health and wellbeing, reward and recognition, progression and development, flexible working, the workload allocation model and research staff induction

From September – January 2020 a working group from HR and R&E led a detailed internal review of progress made against the Action Plan covering the period 2015-2019. This submission reports on progress against the old Concordat. Future priorities and the new Action Plan for 2020-2024 are mapped on to the revised Concordat released in September 2019.

## Our researchers

The University currently employs 137 research-only staff, 76 are on fixed term contracts, 61 are on indefinite or permanent contracts. We continually review the numbers of our research staff on fixed term contracts and where further extensions to contracts are requested, HR ensures that there is an objective justification for the extension and assesses whether continuation of a fixed term contract is appropriate or whether individuals should be transferred to indefinite or permanent contracts. If a researcher’s contract is coming to end, HR actively engages with the individual and their line manager to consider any redeployment opportunities available. HR work closely with the University Careers Service who offer tailored advice and guidance to our research community. Where possible, bridging funding is put in place to ensure the continuity of employment for our researchers and we have some recent instances of success. Examples of nurturing internal talent include: Dr Haydn Martin (Research Fellow 2010, Senior Research fellow 2012, now Senior Lecturer); Dr Qunfen Qi (PhD at Huddersfield 2013, now a Senior Research Fellow); Dr Simon Parkinson, Supervisor of the Year 2020, who completed his undergraduate degree at Huddersfield in 2010, PhD in 2014, and is currently a Reader.

## Our support

We have a well-established and wide-ranging coaching and mentoring network, working in partnership with other local HEIs, such as the University of Leeds. Through this partnership we are able to share coaches and mentors, enabling our researchers to be coached or mentored by staff, usually outside of their immediate area. This coaching and mentoring pool enables us to gather confidential feedback on the trends and issues within our University, including the experiences of our research only staff community.

Our new appraisal process incorporates a number of data sources, including PGR numbers, PGR completions, publications outputs, grant income applied for and awarded, and citations. On an annual basis, HR P&OD and other members of URCEOG will work with School Leadership Teams to analyse the data resulting from the appraisal process, and therefore review career progression, performance and what support and development may be beneficial to support our research only staff cohort.

In addition, we have P&OD champions in each School who help to ensure that the learning activities have the right focus, content and is delivered in the right way. These relationships provide the HR P&OD team with ‘ears on the ground’ and are an extremely useful source of information and discussion, including the challenges faced by our research only staff.

## Key Achievements and Progress 2017-2019 mapped to Concordat Principles

### Principle One: Recruitment and Selection

* There has been a shift in the way that we recruit researchers since the last HR Excellence in Research submission, with a focus now on appointing research staff on indefinite and permanent contracts.
* HR continue to support research staff that are employed on fixed-term contracts through the redeployment process and work closely with researchers and their line managers to try to secure alternative employment where possible.
* Schools across the University provide bridge-funding to research staff on a fixed-term contracts where possible. This process of bridge-funding helps ensure continuity of service and security of employment.
* The University has introduced a Research Excellence Staff Scheme (RESS) which aims to provide opportunities for excellent research staff from other Institutions to join the University on indefinite contracts.
* Although there is no formal mechanism for progression from Research Assistant to Research Fellow, through the appraisal process (between line manager and their staff member) and as part of succession planning discussions within the Schools, promotional opportunities are considered for research staff including Research Assistants.
* HR scrutinise each new request for Research Assistant posts to ensure that they satisfy the appropriate criteria for research posts. Research Assistant positions are predominately linked to specific externally funded projects rather than centrally funded by Schools.

#### Induction

* HR have produced a new induction offering, promoted on University webpages, which include information on the working environment, services provided across the University and key learning for new starters. All starters are contacted directly by HR to cover the mandatory induction requirements and optional sessions new starters can attend.
* The target for CROS May 2019 was 80% finding role induction useful, we have achieved 73%, which, despite not quite achieving target, is significant progress from 54% in 2017.
* A comprehensive framework for research specific induction was developed based on analysis of survey data and with input from Schools and Services. The research induction framework covers Postgraduate Researchers, and staff researchers at all levels of experience and with targeted plans for those new to the institution and/or new to role.

### Principle Two: Recognition and Value

* In 2019, CROS scores relating to recognition and value around research activities average 48% which is above the benchmark and an increase from 2017 (33%) for similar institutions (43%).
* The Quality of Working Life staff survey (QoWL) is a way HR measure the overall quality of life that is influenced by staff members experience working at the University. As a result of the QoWL survey, HR has worked with Schools and Services to put action plans in place.

The University offer a number of formal and informal flexible working arrangements and these are available to all staff including researchers. There are many options for staff to work flexibly to enable them to meet their personal needs. The University has approved over 95% of formal flexible working requests in the last three years. There are many more informal, temporary and permanent arrangements agreed on a local level between line managers and employees.

Information on flexible working is disseminated to employees and their line managers through various means, including emails, discussions with HR managers and notices on the HR website.

Our approach to Research Leader Development has changed significantly from the previous Action Plan, and we work with the entire staff population to identify and embed leadership-knowledge, skills and behaviours. We have partnered with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), the only Chartered-awarding organisation of Management and Leadership qualifications. All managers (including academic/research staff) are asked to sign up to the CMI code of ethics. This CMI code of ethics is essentially our behavioural framework. The aim is for all (100%) of staff who manage people or projects to become and remain a Chartered Manager. We have five distinct management and leadership development programmes, each with a different. We have created a culture in which great management and leadership is embedded at all levels and across Schools and Services.

To identify our management and leadership needs, we have developed a systematic and varied approach, providing a holistic picture of how we need to support our University’s management and leadership community. This includes identifying the specific needs of researchers, and putting development plans in place to support them.

To further support the issues faced by research staff, we have built an extensive coaching, mentoring and buddying offering. Opportunities are promoted through the Staff Development website and social media platforms and the aim is to help embed coaching, mentoring and buddying at all levels across our academic/research community.

### Principle Three and Four: Support and Career Development

All staff can expect to have an annual appraisal. Since roles vary, development activities will vary too. Both line managers and staff are responsible for ensuring development plans are implemented, and remain relevant by means of regular reviews throughout the year. Schools monitor the alignment of individual performance objectives and development plans with their strategy plans.

HR work collaboratively with the Researcher Environment team to implement a comprehensive and relevant offering for researchers, and conduct a thorough training needs analysis to explore what kinds of development support academics might need. The Researcher Environment team, Computing and Library Services and the Graduate School deliver a number of workshops, seminars, forums, groups, and associations to support researchers at all stages of their careers.

All sessions offered through HR Staff Development are now mapped against the Vitae RDF with course descriptions including how the session supports a particular aspect of the RDF.

The RDF has also been used in postgraduate researcher supervisor training to increase awareness of the framework as a tool for PGRs through to PIs reaching approximately one third of those eligible to supervise in 2017-2019.

The RDF is also used in central PGR training, so those PGRs who go on to become academics here will already have some awareness.

### Principle Five: Researchers’ Responsibilities

* To address the possibility of researchers potentially feeling isolated from the wider research community, the University welcomes and supports the development of staff networks. We actively promote and facilitate engagement with the following networks: University of Huddersfield Professoriate Network; Chartered Manager Leadership ‘Alumni’ Community; Trainers Forum. The University has four staff networks run by and for the members, with support from the University EDI Officer: LGBTQI+ Staff Network; BAME Staff Network; Staff Disability Network; Women’s Staff Network.
* To increase awareness and engagement of Athena SWAN activities, staff networks provide an opportunity for staff who share a protected characteristic to network, obtain peer support and share information. They can also offer opportunities for staff to inform University policy on equality-related issues and topics.
* The University has introduced a Public Impact and Engagement Club. The PIE Club holds an annual event where researchers can inform the strategic direction for public engagement in the University and hear about the strategic direction for the sector over the coming year. This enables them to contextualise public engagement work in their area; learn more about the resources and examples of good practice available; and assist in delivery against the University’s commitment to the Concordat for the Public Engagement with Research.

### Principle Six: Equality and Diversity

* The University Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Enhancement Committee (EDIEC) was established in June 2019 and replaces the University’s Athena SWAN Committee and an EDI committee for Teaching and Learning. The Committee is responsible for developing and implementing University EDI policies, framework and schemes for all staff and students and is chaired by a Pro Vice-Chancellor.
* The HR Occupational Health team help promote and maintain the health and well-being of staff and have specialist occupational health practitioners. Occupational Health provide advice and support if staff are experiencing ill health which is impacting upon their ability to undertake their duties within the workplace. This includes managing our Mental Health First Aid network and DSE provision.
* The University is accredited by the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, the national accreditation standard that recognises an organisation’s commitment to improving the lives of those who work here.
* SilverCloud, an on-line employee assistance resource, was introduced which allows staff to access a number of programmes to help support their overall wellbeing. It offers secure, immediate access to online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy programmes tailored to staff members’ specific needs. These programmes have demonstrated high improvement rates for depression and anxiety.

### Principle Seven: Implementation and Review

* URCEOG strengthened and reinvigorated and now includes early career and postgraduate researcher representation.
* Members of R&E have been involved in consultation for the revised Concordat and have disseminated the proposed changes to the Institution.
* Research Concordat was used to inform the Institutional Survey.

## Future priorities 2020-2024

* Drive a revised focus towards Open Research, providing infrastructure and support to enable a research intensive culture which will deliver the University’s 2025 Research Strategy aims:
  + Increase our international recognition via the volume and quality of research outputs
  + Increase our research and knowledge exchange income
  + Become a focus for productivity improvement, impact and enterprise.
* Having signed up to the revised Concordat, use it as guiding tool to improve support for researchers.
* Build on the work of URCEOG (now URCOG), in moving towards greater embedding of Concordat principles and obligations at all levels.
* Aim for 100% of our managers to achieve Chartered Manager status.
* Improve communication across the institution around research careers including sharing of best practices.
* Run a pilot research focussed event bringing together researchers at all levels which will raise awareness of the work of researchers within the University. The event is likely to be online (e.g. a Twitter conference) whilst remote working remains in place, but will pave the way for a research festival or conference in the future.
* Monitor progress with the Action Plan using CEDARS (the replacement for CROS/PIRLS) including improved analysis of data on Research Only vs Teaching and Research roles; dissemination of data to all stakeholders; and regular review at URCOG.

## Broad success indicators

* Improved scores in CEDARS and QoWLS for researchers
* Submission of annual report on progress to Senate via URCOG and University Research Committee.
* University of Huddersfield Institutional Survey and follow up focus groups run again within the period of the Action Plan.

# Appendix – University of Huddersfield Research and Researchers

The University of Huddersfield (UoH)was designated university status in 1992. It is a member of UUK and Yorkshire Universities and until November 2018 was a member of the University Alliance (UA). Based within the Leeds City Region, the University is an anchor institution and major employer and in 2019 became a signatory to the UPP Civic University Agreement. Significant economic and demographic challenges exist to drive collaborative R&D with local organisations. The North’s GVA per capita is ~10 to 15% below the UK average (excluding London) with several contributory factors *e.g.* lack of skilled people, technology gaps and reduced appetite for innovation. The lack of regional private sector R&D investment presents a major challenge for developing collaborative research initiatives with local industry.

The University has seven academic schools undertaking research in a broad range of disciplines with particular emphasis on STEM, humanities, social sciences, business, art and design (18 Units of Assessment in total). This broad portfolio of activity is also recognised by Huddersfield’s assignment to Cluster E in the forthcoming KEF exercise. Some research areas are well established and have been submitted to multiple REF and RAE exercises, whilst others such as drama, media, architecture, sports science and psychology this will be their first submission. The schools are supported by seven central support service directorates and are overseen by the Vice Chancellor’s Office. In total,1894 FTE staff are employed, of which 45% are academics with 15% of these being at professorial level. All academic staff are expected to be research active and this is reflected in their job roles and workload allocation models. Academic staff are expected to publish research of at least 2\* quality by the end of the current University Strategy period (2025), building on the previous strategy (2013-2018) which aimed for all academic staff to be publishing at, or better than, national level. All academic staff, except a very small number of those on practitioner contracts, are returned to HESA categories of Teaching and Research (T&R) or Research Only (RO). No academic members of staff are on teaching only contracts. A key element of the University’s strategy is to support academic staff who do not hold a doctorate to become qualified and staff are expected to study for a doctorate either at Huddersfield or elsewhere, before developing into independent active researchers.