

## HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) 10-year review and report

### Introduction and Background

The University of Huddersfield first received the European HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) in 2011 and received renewal at subsequent reviews in 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019 (awarded 2020).

The full list of completed actions and progress made since 2011 are published on the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) webpage.

The Action Plans are mapped to the revised (2019) Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Researcher Development Concordat), which the [University of Huddersfield signed in January 2020](#).

### Our Researchers

The University currently employs 125 research-only staff and although this number has slightly reduced over the last 2 years, over half are now on permanent or indefinite 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. This has been a focus for the HR team and working together with the research leaders and Associate Deans – Research, Innovation, Knowledge & Enterprise has resulted in transferring more members of research staff to permanent and indefinite contracts than previously.

### Internal Review and Evaluation

Oversight of the Researcher Development Concordat Action Plans and the HREiR progress lies with the University Research and Careers Oversight Group (URCOG). URCOG is chaired by the Director of Human Resources and reports to the University Research Committee which in turn reports to University Council. Professor Andrew Ball, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation, Knowledge & Enterprise chairs the University Research Committee and is also a member of University Council. URCOG includes representation from Research, Innovation, Knowledge & Enterprise (RIKE), representatives from the six Academic Schools, the Dean of Graduate School, Human Resources, members of our Research community including early career researchers, Research Fellows and postgraduate researchers. Progress has continued to be informally evaluated via a smaller working group that was established in January 2019. This working group includes colleagues from RIKE and Human Resources and meets monthly to assess progress against the current Action Plan, receive updates from across the institution on activities to support researchers and coordinates further initiatives to support our researcher community. The group use a RAG rating scheme to monitor and maintain momentum in all areas.

### Community engagement, research population and key stakeholders

Engaging directly with the research population is of paramount importance, so that researchers' concerns and suggestions can be raised within the Institution. This also provides a way to consider opportunities for them. Data gathering and information sharing has been undertaken throughout the last two years using a range of sources, activities, and a variety of media including:

- CEDARS survey 2020 and 2021 – analysis of the quantitative data has taken place and of

qualitative data is in progress, highlighting key areas for further analysis and discussion. Institution wide data has been shared at URCOG. Relevant subsets of the data have been shared with Associate Deans for Research and Enterprise; Research Integrity Champions; and Services.

- Focus Groups were carried out on themes that were highlighted in the last Institutional Survey, the outcomes of which were shared with stakeholders.
- Graduate Board and URCOG now include early career representatives

### **Key achievement and progress since 2020**

Since 2020 the University of Huddersfield's main focus has been on supporting the wellbeing and mental health of our research staff, providing career development sessions for our research staff and rationalising the training we provide to this group of staff. In some areas progress has not moved as swiftly as anticipated, in part due to the move to remote working, but also due to delays in replacing staff in the Researcher Environment team and changes in senior management in RIKE. However, there have been some significant achievements including:

- The continued development of the network of Mental Health First Aiders through training and peer support.
- The development of the People and Organisational Development theme on Wellbeing to include several new and impactful courses and resources to support researchers' positive wellbeing and mental health.
- Increased awareness and monitoring of the overall use of our Confidential Wellbeing Support for staff (online wellbeing support tool).
- Achieved accreditation of the National Wellbeing Charter in December 2020.
- All managers and staff have completed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace and Unconscious Bias online training modules.
- The Careers Service has been actively promoted to our research staff who have been encouraged to book 1:1 career discussion sessions or careers coaching session with a fully trained careers consultant. These appointments were available both virtually and in person.
- Raised awareness for leadership development opportunities amongst our research staff for them to develop their self-awareness and leadership skills.
- A *What can I do with a doctorate?* course for early career researchers focussed on career transitions has been positively received, participants report "I have a much clearer plan about where I hope to go next, and how I can get there."
- [Mid-Career Researcher Mentoring Programme](#) pilot scheme successfully created and now running with Manchester Metropolitan, Salford, Liverpool and Lancaster Universities.
- Establishment of a Research Integrity Champions network whose impact is reflected in >10% above benchmark scores for all sections of Q39 (research integrity awareness and reporting) in CEDARS 2021.
- Overall, members of staff feel valued, scoring >10% above benchmark in CEDARS 2021 for all sections of Q16 around the value of contributions to appraisals, staff performance, developing researchers, supervising PGRs, teaching and lecturing, external examining (research theses), policy and decision-making and management and administration.

### **Future Plans**

As the University shifts its focus from its immediate response to COVID to new ways of working, URCOG will be proactive in understanding the experiences of research teams and researchers as individuals as they seek to make up for any lost time. The leadership and management of these teams, through transition and beyond, will be paramount, and the training and development programmes and support will need to be in place to reflect these needs.

The University will be undertaking a University-wide staff survey in 2022. This along with the University of Huddersfield Institutional Survey of Researchers will enable any issues identified to be followed up in more specific focus groups.

At a more practical level, ensuring research staff receive the ten development days that they are entitled to needs a mechanism to track and monitor this activity. We have identified a system (the new on-line PDPR system) and this will be launched in April 2022. We will ensure these days are of real value to the individual Researcher's professional and career development and that a wide range of opportunities are available.

To help to develop the sense of community and belonging for our researchers across the University several events are due to take place in 2022. These include full day research conferences and festivals and shorter research workshops and events.

The forward-looking Action Plan outlines a set of specific actions focused on creating a research environment and culture in which research staff and those that manage them are supported and recognised. It has been developed by URCOG in consultation with our research staff and aligns with the broader ambitions of the University in relation to the research environment and culture.

The actions focus on improving communications and the visibility of the provision and support for research staff, promoting inclusivity, recognising and rewarding those who support the careers and development of research staff, addressing job security concerns, developing leadership programmes and enhancing professional development opportunities.