Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Universities and Research Institutes

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[1] Variation in wording from the original template was checked with the CDR secretariat 22/7/24.

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Sheffield Hallam University 2024

Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers *(max 500 words)*

Equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) is an area of increasing focus within Sheffield Hallam and our vision of a culture of inclusion is being led by the Vice Chancellor and a new EEDI team which was established in September 2023. Our EEDI framework 2024-7 is about bringing strands of work together; talking about EEDI in a consistent and coherent way; and making it simpler for our staff, students, and partners to understand. We have three clear aims which guide inclusion work at corporate and local level: i) people at Sheffield Hallam **experience** an inclusive environment where they feel they belong; ii) our commitment to EEDI is clear, coherent and **visible**; and iii) we focus on activities that are measurable and have **impact**. Our five equality objectives have been refreshed to foreground the celebration of diversity, collective responsibility, equality of opportunity, embedded inclusion and being an exemplar in the Sheffield City Region and beyond.

In addition to the overarching emphasis on EEDI across the institution, the establishment of the Researcher and Innovator Development Academy (RIDA) in January 2024, as part of our Research and Innovation (R&I) Strategic Framework, aims to ensure that people at all stages of R&I activity and from all professional backgrounds are supported and connected through the broad R&I community. The aims of RIDA are to create an accessible and equitable development offer for all researchers, from doctoral researchers to professors, as well as staff who are new to or support R&I activities. Support for development is tailored to the needs of staff and students, as identified through surveys and individual development plans; enabling them to realise their ambitions and their potential; make positive progress; and be able to reflect on a positive, supported and fulfilling career pathway at Sheffield Hallam.

We are also a partner/lead in three Office for Students (OfS)/Research England race equity projects which are seeking to reduce the barriers to Postgraduate Research (PGR) study and ensure an inclusive environment for our PGR researchers. Through one of these projects, we have begun a pilot of a competency-based admissions framework for PGR recruitment which seeks to tackle inequality at scale by shifting the focus to the competencies required to successfully undertake PGR study, rather than the reliance on academic track record and previous awarding institution. Implementation of the framework in each of our four Research Institutes, beyond the two specific schemes where it is used already, has been informed by in-depth discussions and feedback from workshops held with the Doctoral School and PGR leadership teams.

We set the expectation that individual researchers and teams will contribute to transforming our research culture through the individual R&I plan process, which informs the award of research-related time allocations for academic staff, and applications to internal R&I funding and fellowship schemes. The former requires the submission of a narrative CV outlining contributions to the development of others and the R&I community. The latter also includes statements on how applicants are embedding the principles of EDI, climate action and our Hallam Values, with a particular focus on research integrity.

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success *(max 600 words)*

Driven by our Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, our ambitious plan to deliver R&I excellence galvanises collaboration and interdisciplinary research and places *our people and culture* at the heart of our activities. Our plan has four themes - *Capacity, Capability, Connectivity, and Culture* – positioning the University for sustainable growth, underpinned by Researcher and Innovator Development, and aligning with our Concordat Action Plan. Our overarching objective is to develop a cadre of skilled people equipped to upskill others, to grow and expand benefits from sustainable R&I to all.

However, we acknowledge that along with all institutions across the sector, we are currently in a period of financial challenge, which has necessitated a restructuring of academic colleges. While this will have short term impact on the number of staff with significant responsibility for research, it also presents new opportunities for staff to progress their R&I careers. RIDA is well placed to mitigate changes in staff complement and our approach to supporting and developing all staff through RIDA will ensure that we continue to grow the capacity and capability of our academic colleagues towards an increased submission for REF2029.

Environment and culture

Our approach to R&I culture embodies the University's ambition to create a transformational and aspirational culture of inclusion for all students and staff. We are proud of the rich diversity of our community and value a culture where every individual is supported to succeed and thrive. We want to build on the thriving, inclusive R&I culture here at Sheffield Hallam and increase visibility and celebration of R&I success and impact, ensuring greater synergy by embedding R&I in our taught programmes across the university and by ensuring routes into R&I are inclusive and accessible at all levels.

We have invested in our research infrastructure, building a more sustainable and supportive environment in which cross-disciplinary working can thrive to support delivery of R&I and KE across the academic colleges and build critical mass to address areas of global importance. We do this through a thematic approach focused on research and teaching strengths and areas of strategic growth: AI data analytics and robotics; Lifelong health and wellbeing; Climate action and energy; and Inclusive and just society - which sit across structures, framing and building capacity to address key societal challenges.

Employment

Over 60% of staff on research-only contacts are employed on a permanent basis. However, we acknowledge that career progression is not always straightforward for those not on a Teaching and Research academic contract. Therefore, we are undertaking a review of our academic career pathways, to ensure they support the career development of our researchers at every stage of their career and enable Sheffield Hallam to attract, retain and develop talented research staff. In addition, our redeployment practices enable research employees on fixed term contracts entry onto the redeployment register up to a maximum of three months prior to their contract expiry date - enabling retention of research expertise and knowledge as well as decreasing precarity.

Professional Development of Researchers

Under the **capability** strand of our R&I strategy, we have recently launched RIDA, which is being co-created with our researchers and innovators, building upon our existing provision, to offer flexible development opportunities tailored to researchers and innovators at all career stages. In February 2023, we launched the Sheffield Hallam R&I Fund (SHRIF), an internal funding scheme, which aims to support inclusive and impactful R&I towards growth and sustainability. To date, we have funded 22 projects totalling £750k, from across the institution with teams comprised of staff at various stages of academic and professional service careers.

Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/PIs); Researchers]

Environment and Culture *(max 600 words)*	**Institution** The Researcher Concordat Operations Group (RCOG) is now chaired by the Head of RIDA and membership has been revised to reflect changes in roles and reinforce links with the EEDI and Academic Development agendas at the university. The group serves as a route for feedback and consultation on progress against the Concordat

principles and to monitor progress against the action plan. A new operations group is being established under RIDA to provide regular oversight of research culture and professional development aspects of this work. Membership of this group will overlap with and complement RCOG to include research-adjacent staff from across the university, to enable effective co-ordination of the development offer in response to organisational and individual researcher priorities.

Monitoring and evaluation of EDI data is embedded into internal R&I funding (SHRIF) and fellowship (ECRIF) schemes and recruitment of new research leaders via our Transforming Lives Fellowship scheme (TLFs). Gender, ethnicity and disability profiles are compared for groups at each stage of application, interview and appointment and compared to university data to determine if any further action is required to attract/support underrepresented groups. This is also done for specific development programmes so that we can understand the uptake in terms of diversity of the research cohort.

Our approach to tackling harassment, sexual misconduct and hate crime is underpinned by our Protect and Respect development programme. Phase 1 is available to all staff and students, but the content and scope of Phase 2 will now be influenced by the expected changes to the OfS condition of registration in relation to Harassment & Sexual Misconduct. The Culture Environment Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) 2023 data indicates improvements in familiarity with mechanisms for reporting discrimination (59% in 2021 to 64% in 2023) and comfort in reporting (52% in 2021 to 63% in 2023). Comfort in reporting incidents of bullying and harassment has also improved (53% in 2021 to 62% in 2023).

Academic Managers of Researchers

Our online off-the-shelf research integrity training was supplemented and brought to life for academic year 2023/24 by a comprehensive programme of live events, delivered by university staff (typically University Research Ethics Committee members). Eleven events have run on a range of topics including authorship guidance, data protection, and risk assessment. Engagement has increased significantly, with many sessions exceeding 50 attendees and recordings are made available on a SharePoint site as permanent resources, which can be accessed by all researchers when it is most timely for them.

We saw increased engagement in the CEDARS survey run in 2023 (263 responses compared to 163 responses in 2021). CEDARS has indicated many positive changes in terms of the management of researchers. Significantly more managers have undertaken CPD in conducting appraisals (35% to 69% in 2023), managing staff performance (38% to 63% in 2023) and leadership (42% to 65% in 2023). More importantly, we have also seen positive changes experienced by researchers with their managers clearly articulating their expectations (69% to 77% in 2023) and providing clear, constructive and timely feedback on performance (57% to 65% in 2023).

Researchers

Since January 2023, the Early Career Researcher (ECR) network has met four times to discuss and provide feedback to the PVC RIKE on research initiatives. Meetings were paused pending the launch of RIDA and to allow for conversations to take

	place around options for broadening out the network beyond ECRs. We sought input from the ECR reps and other RCOG members who agreed it would be beneficial to create a broader researcher and innovator network with reps at different levels in line with the RIDA remit. This proposal will be taken forward later in 2024. As previously mentioned, the University is partner/co-lead on three OfS projects. There are opportunities within these projects for researchers to act as supervisors, mentors or advocates for new or aspiring PGRs (via an inclusive open call). All of the projects include race equity workshops for staff supervising and supporting PGRs to examine their current practice and individual roles in perpetuating the inequalities that exist in doctoral education.
Employment *(max 600 words)*	**Institution** CEDARS 2023 identified an opportunity to improve institutional induction (48% found it useful/very useful). A researcher and innovator induction session was piloted in April 2024 with a small cohort of Transforming Lives Fellows. The session provided an opportunity to get to know other new starters, gain an overview of R&I at Sheffield Hallam and discuss pre-selected topics of most interest to attendees with relevant professional services colleagues. Examples of topics discussed are performance, progression and expectations; research funding; REF and research impact. This session will be modified based on feedback and offered to new starters (and those wanting a refresher or introduction to R&I) each semester. 38% of our research-only staff are on fixed term contracts. When developing the SHRIF scheme the university has included provision for the use of allocated funding to bridge between projects where an individual's unique expertise and knowledge is required for activity delivery provided this is compliant with HR regulations and procedures and it is clear what activities the funding is providing bridging between and how strong the future opportunity is. Information about our internally produced Declaration On Research Assessment (DORA) training module has now been included in the HR and Organisational Development (HROD) SharePoint pages for academic selection, the HROD recruitment and reward team have been informed of the module during team meetings and will be ensuring recruiters of academic staff have their attention drawn to this training to ensure the responsible use of metrics in academic staff recruitment activities. **Academic Managers of Researchers and Researchers** A number of sessions and workshops have been delivered for staff on Narrative CVs including externally facilitated online workshops by Scafell Coaching and internal workshops organised by ECR network representatives within research institutes. Sessions have covered an introduction to Narrative CVs and why they have been adopted in particular schemes (e.g. SHRIF and ECRIF) and included as part of the R&I plan process. They have also included research leaders with experience of reviewing narrative CVs sharing their tips on what they are looking for and common pitfalls they have noticed. A central SharePoint page holds a number of sector-developed resources and internal session recordings, which to date has been accessed 2,612 times.

	Reviewer training sessions that include how Narrative CVs should be considered alongside applications have been run for ECR reviewers involved in the internal SHRIF scheme.
	The experience of creating Narrative CVs and the usefulness of the support sessions and resources available are currently being evaluated via survey and 1:1 interviews with both successful and unsuccessful applicants as part of the SHRIF scheme evaluation. Findings from the evaluation will inform next steps.
	As of December 2023, new functionality has been introduced on the Elements system, which is already used to record research outputs and grants, to support researchers to develop their Narrative CVs and R&I Plans. When staff submit their R&I plans for review it should be presented in combination with their narrative CV, it cannot be reviewed without the latter. These will be used under the REF Code of Practice principles with decisions based on forward-looking R&I plans set against track record and trajectory. The use of the Elements system enables staff to add supporting evidence to their narrative CV at any time and to export their CV at different times for different purposes.
Professional development *(max 600 words)*	**Institution**
	The third cohort of the Early Career R&I Fellows (ECRIFs) commenced their fellowship in January 2024 and applications have recently closed for cohort four. The current cohort of 13 ECRIFs have all been matched with a mentor of their choice who have received mentoring training from HROD ahead of the start of the fellowship. ECRIFs also receive a programme of development in which they outline their needs during monthly discussion sessions. Last year's cohort received development in knowledge exchange, research impact, funding, social media and working with the media.
	The scheme is evaluated each year via both mid-year and end of fellowship surveys and a focus group at the fellowship close which then informs future support needs for the outgoing cohort and improvements to the scheme for future cohorts. Changes made for the current cohort include altering the start to January instead of September, the option to condense 0.4 FTE fellowship hours to one semester or spread over the academic year and the option for fellows to suggest up to three mentors to work with during their fellowship. Data from all cohorts to date (including EEDI data) is currently being reviewed by the Head of RIDA and the working group will revisit the scheme in light of this to ensure the support provided to applicants meets their needs.
	Out of the 63 ECRI Fellowships awarded to date, three have been promoted internally to Associate Professor, six have progressed externally to other academic institutions, three have progressed to roles in industry and one has been awarded a prestigious UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship.
	Academic Managers of Researchers
	A cohort of the Senior Leadership Development Programme ran from April – September 2023 targeted at research leaders including Dean of Research, Heads of Department, Heads of Research Centre, PVCs, Associate Deans and Research Institute Directors. The programme consists of four workshops (covering:

understanding the self, relational behaviours, exploring the system, and leadership thinking), three learning sets, three individual coaching sessions and the opportunity to meet with some of our Governors to discuss the leadership journey. An evaluation to assess impact and return on investment is currently taking place with a view to running an internal version in future.

Researchers

We continue to provide opportunities for Sheffield Hallam staff to engage with the outside world through a variety of knowledge exchange activities including exhibitions, workshops and networks.

We hosted an Academic Industry Meeting day (AIMday) in June 2023 to capitalise on the investment into imaging technologies across the university by building cross-disciplinary collaborations and open a dialogue with potential industry partners. It was attended by over 60 people and consisted of six workshops with questions from five companies. Our staff attendees (researchers, academics and technicians) who responded to the follow up survey said they benefitted from meeting other researchers (93% agreed); building their external network (80%), understanding the needs of companies (88%) and discovering how their knowledge could be put to use (81%). A number of useful leads arising from the event are being worked up into fundable propositions.

The SHRIF internal funding scheme also provides opportunities for researchers to engage the public, businesses and other stakeholders with their research. In round one, 11 successful projects were funded involving 17 external partner organisations from the region. In round two, a further 11 projects were funded involving 30 partner organisations.

Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result. *(max 500 words)*

Providing a **longer lead time** (2 months) and **scheduling outside of core teaching time** ensured excellent attendance at two recent PGR supervisor training events in May (n=30, 97% and n=27, 100%). Therefore, we aim to give a longer lead time for opportunities next academic year and where possible hold training for researchers with teaching commitments outside of core teaching times.

Researchers **engage and participate more effectively** (particularly females and staff from minority groups) in our schemes when we: hold launch events; provide dedicated points of contact and mentoring support. Providing case studies; celebrating successes and passing on knowledge between researcher cohorts has developed peer-to-peer learning and maximised the potential of our initiatives.

The **collection and use of data** to enable ongoing monitoring of researcher engagement, including EDI analysis, of R&I initiatives is critical to reaching all of our researcher community and minimising barriers or challenges to engagement. Our academic staff on teaching and research contracts are allocated additional work planned time to undertake research based on their annual R&I plan, this year we included **questions about support** allowing answers to be collated and ascribed to individuals. Groups of staff requesting support with aspects of R&I activities can now be compiled and specific development programmes designed and delivered in a more targeted way, maximising engagement, effectiveness and agility.

Involving our researchers in the design and review of our programmes allows for continuous improvement and development e.g., researchers co-developed our SHRIF internal R&I funding scheme, resulting in: the creation of a launch event; refreshed guidance and FAQs for applicants. In addition, to provide development opportunities,

promote transparency and encourage accessibility of the scheme, we invited one mid-career researcher to be on the working group and two early career and one mid-career researcher to observe the review panel. For the following round we implemented: targeted support for ECRs; strengthened EDI requirements to encourage team diversity and developed and supported our ECRIFs as reviewers. Consequently, we plan to expand our reviewer panels for our ECRIF scheme to include ECRs and previous ECRIF holders.

To ensure the **researcher voice** is heard and valued our researchers and research managers regularly review and provide feedback on our schemes e.g. researchers from our Education Institute are independently evaluating our SHRIF scheme. The development of RIDA has enabled additional opportunities for researcher voice activities including: focus groups seeking views on the development and priorities of RIDA, informed by CEDARS findings, and the option to suggest further topics for development sessions on booking and feedback forms. We now have more direct links into working groups for internal staff surveys.

Compiling last year's HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) renewal and this annual report has highlighted that our **action plan** is difficult to navigate and no longer appears to accurately reflect our current institutional priorities. In addition, the development of RIDA has progressed some actions and deprioritised others. To maximise efficiency and efficacy, the coordination of our development offer will be a priority next year. Members of RCOG and the RIDA operations group will work together to revise our action plan ensuring alignment with and complementation of other institutional action plans e.g. EEDI and RIDA.

Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period

(max 500 words)

The establishment of RIDA involved an external review of the researcher development opportunities at Sheffield Hallam and a series of ten focus groups with researchers (PGRs and staff) representing the entire research community at Sheffield Hallam. This review found we have an extensive, well-received provision and a people focused approach, our student-supervisor relationships are broadly good, and mentoring is widely appreciated. Five challenge areas were also identified, these along with the findings from our 2023 CEDARS survey, shaped the following five priorities for 2024-25:

1. **Enhancing Research culture**: expanding our training and development offer to include opportunities for senior researchers and staff in the hope that leading by example along with strong messaging from senior leaders will empower our researchers, to engage with the training and development opportunities most relevant to them. In collaboration with our estates team, we will provide a dedicated space twice weekly throughout the year for researcher training and development. To complement local and central inductions, we have piloted a researcher induction led by colleagues representing all areas of the campus that support our current and future researchers, we will modify this based on feedback and repeat each semester.
2. **Co-ordination of researcher training and development**: will be provided in the form of a word press site acting as a one stop shop for all researchers from PGR to Professor. We will coordinate an annual calendar of training and development opportunities including provision from across the entire institution. We will also house resources on a number of topics of relevance to our researchers and signpost them both externally and across the institution to sources of further support and information e.g. local research interest groups, specialist professional services support teams etc.
3. **Improving communication**: we will relaunch our ECR staff network to be more inclusive and rebrand as an R&I staff network; we will maintain momentum with our internal communications strategy that started with the publication of a RIDA Q&A, R&I drop-in sessions and an in-person R&I townhall.

4. **Expanding continuing professional development:** we will continue to work with colleagues across the university to develop new programmes and resources to fill emerging gaps in provision and support an enhanced focus on effective career conversations as part of the staff annual performance and development review (PDR).

5. **Evaluating and developing**: we will continually evaluate our existing and future offerings in order to develop and enhance our provision. A RIDA road map has been developed that will be updated and monitored over the next three to five years, progress and relevance will be assessed by a soon to be established RIDA operations group.

In addition, we have recently joined the Researchers 14 network to learn from and share best practice with other researcher developers across the HE sector. We will soon join the UK reproducibility network, a collaboration with like-minded institutions with the aim of enhancing the quality of research by improving transparency.

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (max 200 words)

This report has been created by members of the University Researcher Concordat Operations Group (RCOG), chaired by Dr Gaynor Miller (Head of RIDA). Consultation was carried out with HREiR action owners and with Senior College and ECR representatives from the RCOG membership. RCOG reports to Research Leadership Group (RLG) chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, RLG oversees University R&I strategy and associated delivery.

This report provides an overview of our progress towards implementing our action plan over the past 12 months. It has been received by Research and Innovation Committee members (5 June 2024) and recommended to Academic Board by Chair's Action, David Shepherd – R&I Committee. Following Academic Board (26 June 2024) it will be made publicly available via the University's Researcher Concordat webpages.

Signature on behalf of governing body[2]:

Contact for queries: Dr Gaynor Miller, Head of RIDA and Chair of RCOG. G.Miller@shu.ac.uk

This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk

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[2] Signature provided on the copy sent to the CDR secretariat 5/7/24.