



## HR Excellence in Research: University of Strathclyde Twelve-Year Review Report

*The University of Strathclyde was awarded the HR Excellence in Research (HR EiR) Award in September 2011 and retained the award in early 2022 at the ten-year review point. This report summarises progress against the 2022-2024 Action Plan as well as our focus for the next three years.*

### A. Background and Internal Review

The University of Strathclyde is a leading International Technological University that is socially progressive and aims to make a positive difference to society and the world. The University has approximately 560 members of Research Staff<sup>1</sup> (Research Assistants, Associates, Fellows, Senior Fellows and Principal Fellows) and 810 members of Academic Staff<sup>2</sup> within four Faculties: Engineering, Science, Humanities & Social Sciences (HaSS) and the Strathclyde Business School. Strathclyde also has strong links to a wide array of external partners in industry, government and third sectors. Strathclyde's [Values](#) – People-Oriented, Bold, Ambitious, Innovative and Collaborative – along with our [People Strategy](#), underpin the University's activities, including our institutional approach to Researcher Development.

Strathclyde is strongly committed to supporting the professional and career development of our Researchers and became a signatory to the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers ('RD Concordat') in June 2020. A comprehensive institution-wide *Gap Analysis* process and consultation took place during 2020/21 to develop our *Institutional RD Concordat Action Plan* ('Institutional Action Plan') which was approved by University Court in June 2021 and formed the basis of our 2022-2024 HR EiR Action Plan. With a range of phased, multi-year actions beyond 2024 included in these action plans, this 12-year HR EiR review has provided an opportunity to review the current progress and update the detailed *Institutional Action Plan* based on continuing and new areas of focus. The updated *Institutional Action Plan* was approved by University Court in November 2023 and the 2024-2027 HR EiR Action Plan presents a summary of this planned approach for the next three years.

Implementation of the RD Concordat has been undertaken in close collaboration with other aligned institutional initiatives, such as Athena SWAN, the Research Integrity Concordat and Health & Wellbeing, and the teams that lead these. These initiatives / teams are also represented within the governance structures relating to the RD Concordat, while the RD Concordat team is represented within governance mechanisms of other wider initiatives, as appropriate.

The Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG) oversees the implementation of the *Institutional Action Plan*. The group comprises representatives from all Faculties, the Researchers' Group (the Institutional Research Staff Association) and Professional Services (including HR, Equality & Diversity, Research & Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES), Careers Service and Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU)), meeting every six months and reporting to the Research Development and Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC). RDCSC oversees all staff-facing Researcher Development and Culture activity, itself reporting to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). RDCSC is chaired by the Deputy Associate Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange) and is composed of the Faculty Vice-Deans (Research) as well as representatives of the Researchers' Group, OSDU, the Strathclyde Doctoral School, RKES, HR and Equality & Diversity. Strategic leadership on the RD Concordat is further provided by the Associate Principal (Research &

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<sup>1</sup> This Research Staff population is defined here as *Researchers* in the context of the Researcher Development Concordat; please note that in this report the term *Researchers* does not include Doctoral Students.

<sup>2</sup> This Academic Staff population is considered here as the key group of *Managers of Researchers* in the context of the Researcher Development Concordat, with individual staff members from other job families who line manage Research Staff included as well.

Innovation) who is Strathclyde's Senior Academic Concordat Champion, supported by the Institutional Concordat Champion and a dedicated Researcher Development Concordat Officer role.

Two RD Concordat Working Groups (RDCWGs), focusing on Research Culture and Development & Recognition, respectively, were established in 2021 to facilitate the development of activities in these key areas of the *Institutional Action Plan*. Both Researchers and Managers of Researchers from each Faculty are represented on these groups as well as key Professional Services colleagues.

Strathclyde's staff-facing Researcher Development is delivered by the [Organisational and Staff Development Unit](#) (OSDU) within the HR Directorate, in close collaboration with key units such as RKES, Equality & Diversity, HR as well as Faculties. OSDU has a leading role in both the implementation of the RD Concordat as well as the provision of development opportunities for all staff across the University, with three development programmes specifically targeted at Researchers: the Strathclyde Programme in Research and Leadership ([SPIRAL](#)), the [Strathclyde Supervisor Development Programme](#), and the Strathclyde Programme in Academic Practice, Researcher Development and Knowledge Exchange ([SPARK](#); accredited academic pathways).

### **How the Internal Review Was Undertaken**

Internal evaluation processes around Researcher Development are already well embedded across the University following Strathclyde's participation in the HR Excellence in Research Award process since 2011 and implementation of activities relating to the revised Concordat.

The *Institutional Action Plan* is reviewed every six months by RDCSG and established mechanisms are in place to gain feedback from all stakeholders on progress and areas of focus through RDCSG, the Working Groups, the Researchers' Group as well as targeted surveys such as CEDARS and CEDARS Lite (Strathclyde's internal version of CEDARS which focuses on the questions used within the Action Plan as success measures).

This 12-year HR EiR review provided an opportunity to revise the *Institutional Action Plan* to include new institutional activities which have been implemented since the 2022-2024 Plan was written, update actions which have progressed and remove actions which have been completed or are now business-as-usual.

For this review, the views of Researchers, their Managers and those who support them across the University were additionally sought through a set of focus groups, engagement with Faculty academic representatives and key Professional Services colleagues both in relation to the RD Concordat and wider initiatives as well as extensive and ongoing engagement with the Researchers' Group to revise and update the *Institutional Action Plan*.

The updated *Institutional Action Plan* has been reviewed and approved by senior management committees across the University, including RDCSG, RDCSC, RKEC, Staff Committee, Senate and the University Executive Team. Furthermore, summary reports highlighting our strategy and progress have been received by University Court, Strathclyde's overall governing body, in November each year. This HR EiR submission has been reviewed and approved by RKEC as well as the Researchers' Group.

### **How Researchers' Views Were Taken into Account**

Researchers, as well as Managers of Researchers, have been engaged throughout the review process and are represented in all of the committees and groups directly involved in the review and implementation of the RD Concordat, including RDCSC, RKEC, RDCSG and RDCWGs.

Our review was informed strongly by the results from both CEDARS 2023 as well as our institutional CEDARS Lite 2022 – approximately 104 Researchers participated in 2023, representing 17% of the population (2022: 139 Researchers, 24% of the population), whereas 192 Managers of Researchers were included in CEDARS 2023, corresponding to 24% of their population (2022: 292 Managers of Researchers, 37% of the population). Moreover, another 13 Researchers and 15 Managers of Researchers engaged in more detailed consultations through the focus groups as well as dedicated sessions of the RD Concordat Working Groups, in addition to the continuous engagement with the Researchers' Group and other Researchers across the institution at a variety of career stages.

## B. Key Achievements and Progress Against the 2022 Strategy and 2022 -2024 Action Plan

With Researcher Development well-embedded at Strathclyde, our RD Concordat Strategy, developed against the revised 2019 RD Concordat, has focused in particular on areas where the Concordat's expectations were strengthened and where emerging sector-wide challenges have been identified, thus targeting five strategic themes: *I. Implementation and Governance; II. Research Culture; III. Researcher Career Development and Progression; IV. Managers of Researchers Training and Development; and V. Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making.*

The *Institutional Action Plan* follows a multi-year approach implemented through a phased process, which has allowed a significant amount of progress to be made through targeted and focused initiatives since it was launched. Specific progress highlights are summarised below for each of the key themes of our Concordat strategy:

### **I. Implementation and Governance:**

1. A robust and inclusive governance structure for the Concordat implementation, including RDCSG and the RDCWGs, was established in 2021, designed to have broad representation of all relevant stakeholder groups and be monitored regularly to ensure it is comprehensive and complete. To guarantee continued alignment with broader University priorities, membership of the RDCSG and RDCSC was further expanded during 2022/2023 to include representation of emerging initiatives, such as Health & Wellbeing (*all Concordat Principles*).
2. A new institutional survey ('CEDARS Lite') was launched in Spring 2022 to complement the national, biennial Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS). CEDARS Lite runs in non-CEDARS years, providing enhanced monitoring of Strathclyde's success measures. Strathclyde's annual Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey (PRES) has also been aligned to CEDARS Lite to allow comparison of Research Culture experiences across the full research lifecycle (*all Concordat Principles*).

### **II. Research Culture:**

1. The Researcher Development Sub-Committee was reconstituted in early 2022 to become RDCSC with an expanded remit to encompass reporting and monitoring of Research Culture matters relating to those addressed by the RD Concordat and emergent sector priorities. Indicators to provide a deeper understanding of Strathclyde's Research Culture landscape were developed and have been piloted within the RDCSC reporting processes (*Environment & Culture*).
2. In January 2023, Strathclyde hosted its inaugural Research Integrity & Culture Week to promote research integrity and a positive research culture across the institution which engaged approximately 170 staff members in events / workshops and 400+ total including online engagement. The week comprised a series of events as well as online activities and a sector-wide 'Where next for research integrity & culture?' symposium. The symposium included presentations from, among others, the UK Research Integrity Office, the UK Committee on Research Integrity, and was followed by an out-of-cycle Universities Scotland Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee roundtable (*Environment & Culture*).
3. The University's Dignity & Respect Policy was revised during 2022/23 and the institutional Dignity & Respect Advisor Network was re-launched with 14 new advisors from across Faculties and Professional Services. Advisors have received extensive training and are available to provide support to staff members in relation to matters of any inappropriate behaviour. In addition, a Gender-Based

Violence (GBV) First Responders Network was launched as part of the [institutional Safe 360 framework](#) and includes trained volunteers who can support and liaise with anyone who has been subjected to harm, abuse, sexual assault or sexual harassment (*Environment & Culture*).

4. The University was awarded Silver Athena Swan status in Summer 2023, recognising the policies we have in place, for example around flexible working as well as fair and transparent recruitment and promotion, and the culture we are nurturing to create an environment where staff of all genders and at all levels can thrive. In addition to this institution-level award, Strathclyde also holds 16 Departmental Athena Swan awards (*Environment & Culture*).
5. Strathclyde has been awarded approx. £1M from the Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture call for the institution-wide project “Cultures of Collaborative Research in a Socially Progressive Technological University”, the project will begin in June 2024 (*Environment & Culture*).
6. Recognising that responsible research assessment practices – those that reward the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research – are required to support a diverse and positive research culture, Strathclyde signed the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) in November 2022 as one of the first UK Universities. By signing, and joining the associated [Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#), Strathclyde has committed to reviewing and revising its practices to align with the principles of responsible research assessment. Strathclyde’s five-year action plan for reforming research assessment was approved in September 2023 (*Environment & Culture, Employment*).

### **III. Researcher Career Development and Progression + IV. Managers of Researchers Training and Development:**

1. To address the obligation that Researchers have access to professional career development advice, a Career Development Advisor for Research Staff was recruited and joined Strathclyde during Summer 2023. Between mid-August and October 2023, 18 Researchers have attended individual career consultations, with many reporting improvements in their mindset and motivation, more clarity and feeling more positive about the future among the benefits. Going forward, the Career Development Advisor will continue to enhance the career provision for Research Staff across the institution (*Career & Professional Development*).
2. An enhanced suite of professional development provision for Researchers and their Managers has been developed and delivered over the last few years, including career development workshops and research leadership programmes, as well as the continuation and enhancement of staff peer networks (for both Researchers and their Managers) which had been launched as part of the *Institutional Action Plan* in 2021/2022. Around 274 Research Staff members engaged with OSDU development programmes in 2022/23, corresponding to almost half of the Researcher population (*Career & Professional Development*).
3. Online Equality and Diversity courses for Managers were made a core requirement of Strathclyde’s mandatory Doctoral Supervisor Training programme during 2022/2023, supporting Managers of Researchers to embed appropriate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practices in their people management and supervisory roles (*Environment & Culture, Employment*).
4. Strathclyde’s Researcher Development Time Policy was approved and launched in Autumn 2023, addressing the Concordat obligation that Researchers are provided with ten days professional development time per year plus time to develop their research identity and leadership skills. The policy is accompanied by extensive guidance for Researchers and their Managers and will be disseminated through a communication strategy in its first year (*Career & Professional Development*).

## **V. Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making:**

1. The Researchers' Group continues to provide representation on all institution- and Faculty-level research-related committees and has expanded to include the newly formed HR Policy Review Forum as well as the REF Advisory Group, the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee and the Race Equality Steering Group (*Employment*).
2. Training for Researchers' Group representatives was implemented in 2022/23 to support individuals taking on new committee positions as it was recognised that most will be undertaking these types of roles for the first time (*Career & Professional Development*).

## **C. Next Steps and Focus of the Strategy for the Next Three Years**

The 2022-24 HR EIR Action Plan was guided by an ambitious, longer-term strategy informed through the comprehensive Gap Analysis undertaken in 2020/21. As the more recent consultations for this review showed, while significant progress has been made these key priorities remain consistent and thus allow us to continue with our overarching strategy, with the current progress forming the basis for future activities.

Actions for the next three years have thus been defined under three lenses:

- addressing new key action topics, in alignment with other institutional initiatives; this will include e.g. work on the institutional infrastructure and staff understanding around ED&I, the development of a Responsible Research Assessment Framework; delivering the Wellcome-funded “Cultures of Collaborative Research in a Socially Progressive Technological University” project as well as the creation of a new Wellbeing Strategy and related engagement mechanisms.
- expanding on existing RD Concordat activities and progress; this will incorporate e.g. activities focused on increasing staff engagement in surveys, continuing and expanding existing development activities as well as increasing staff awareness and understanding of relevant institutional mechanisms, processes and policies.
- progressing areas planned for later phases; this will focus on the topics of career development for Researchers as well as the development & training of Managers of Researchers in particular.

Emphasis across all activities over the next three years will be placed on working in alignment and synergy with other related initiatives, such as the institutional [People Strategy](#) and [Strategic Plan](#), the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#), [CoARA](#), [Technician Commitment](#), [Athena Swan](#) and others.

Success will be measured and monitored in terms of the timely achievement of the Action Plan. For each key strategic theme, this is captured through:

- the operation of appropriate working groups and continued Concordat and Researcher representation within aligned committees and initiatives, as well as, where appropriate, identification of follow-up actions;
- the implementation of new provision and supporting resources, including structures to maintain and update new online resources, as well as mechanisms to regularly monitor and report on continuing activities through the RDCSG, RDCSC and RKEC; and
- evidence of progress/improvement regarding views and perceptions of staff, collected through CEDARS / CEDARS *Lite* and other measures, such as engagement with the Researchers' Group, staff feedback on individual activities and focus groups.