

# HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH: UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE TEN YEAR INTERNAL REVIEW REPORT



*The University of Strathclyde was awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award in September 2011 and retained the award in 2019 at the eight-year review point. This report summarises progress against the 2019-2021 Action Plan as well as our focus for the next two 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 550 members of Research Staff (Research Assistants, Associates, Fellows, Senior Fellows and Principal Fellows\*) and 760 members of Academic Staff within four Faculties: Engineering, Science, Humanities & Social Sciences (HASS) and the Strathclyde Business School. Strathclyde has strong links to a wide array of industrial partners. Strathclyde's [Values](#) are: People Oriented, Bold, Ambitious, Innovative and Collaborative.

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. Strathclyde's Staff-facing Researcher Development is delivered by the [Organisational and Staff Development Unit](#) (OSDU) within the HR Directorate and is underpinned by our Values and [People Strategy](#). Researcher Development activity is overseen by the Researcher Development Sub-Committee (RDSC), which itself reports to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). RDSC is composed of the Faculty Vice-Deans (Research) as well as representatives of OSDU, the Strathclyde Doctoral School, the [Researchers' Group](#) (RG, the Institutional Research Staff Association) and the Doctoral Researchers' Group (the Institutional Doctoral Student Association). The RDSC is chaired by the Deputy Associate Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange).

OSDU provides development provision 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).

On becoming a signatory to the RD Concordat, the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG) was established to advise and oversee our RD Concordat-aligned *Gap Analysis* and *Action Plan* development. The group comprises representatives from all Faculties, the Researchers' Group and Professional Services (including HR, Equality & Diversity, Research & Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES), the Careers Service and OSDU) and reports to RDSC.

### **How the internal review was undertaken**

While internal evaluation processes around Researcher Development are already well embedded across the University following Strathclyde's participation in the HR Excellence in Research (HR EiR) Award process since 2011, the publication of the revised RD Concordat was taken as an opportunity to review the institutional provision for Researchers as a whole through a comprehensive consultation process in 2020/21. The results of this comprehensive and broad-ranging Gap Analysis have been used to develop the *RD Concordat Action Plan* presented for this 10-year HR EiR review.

The views of Researchers, their Managers and those who support them across the University were sought through focus groups, analysis of the results of the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) 2020 and regular engagement with Faculty academic representatives as well as extensive and ongoing engagement with the Researchers' Group. This process was led by Strathclyde's Institutional Concordat Champion, Senior Academic Concordat Champion, and the Deputy Associate Principal (R&KE), as well as a Concordat Officer recruited in 2020. Oversight and advice throughout the consultation was provided by RDCSG.

The Gap Analysis showed that Strathclyde already has a strong basis in Researcher Development in line with the original Concordat with a wide range of provision well-embedded into our Researcher experience and significant areas of good practice throughout the University, such as the [Use of Fixed-Term Contracts Policy](#), the [Strathclyde Pledge](#), substantial development opportunities for Researchers – with over 50% of Researchers engaging with some form of OSDU activity each year, Researcher-specific induction activities and a dedicated "Supporting Research Staff and their Managers" website. Researcher representation is also embedded across the University via the Researchers' Group as well as within Faculty and University Research Committees.

\*defined here as *Researchers* and therefore in this report the term *Researchers* does not include Doctoral Students

The Gap Analysis informed our Strategy and Action Plan presented within this submission, which focus on the new additions and enhanced obligations within the revised RD Concordat while maintaining and ensuring awareness of the support already in place. The *RD Concordat Action Plan* has been reviewed and approved by Senior Management committees across the University, including RDSC, 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 June and November 2021, and to be continued on an annual basis. This HR EIR submission brings together our key achievements since our 8-year review, detailed updates on our 2019-2021 actions along with our strategy, success measures and future actions covering the first two years of our *RD Concordat Action Plan*. This submission has been reviewed and approved by RKEC and the Researchers' Group.

#### **How Researchers' views were taken into account**

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

The Gap Analysis outcomes and development of the *RD Concordat Action Plan* were informed by a set of focus groups examining staff views and experiences in the context of their environment, employment and development in January 2021 with representation from all Faculties. They were led by the Concordat Officer and included three sessions with a total of 21 Researcher participants as well as another three sessions with 18 Academic Staff members managing researchers. This qualitative investigation of the current support and provision for Researchers was complemented by the more quantitative results of CROS & PIRLS 2019 (response rates of 30% and 27%) as well as CEDARS 2020 (response rate of 15% for Researchers and 18% for Managers of Researchers) and CEDARS 2021 (response rate of 21% for Researchers and 31% for Managers of Researchers) to take into account broader researcher views. Moreover, ongoing collaboration with the Researchers' Group, including direct inputs to the formulation of the *RD Concordat Action Plan* via membership of the RDCSG, also provided opportunity to gain Researcher feedback throughout the review process.

#### **B) Key Achievements and Progress Against the 2019 Strategy and 2019 -2021 Action Plan**

A significant focus of activity within the period of this report has been the Gap Analysis consultation and Action Plan development. These focused on the revised Concordat Principles which also address the original Concordat Principles. In addition, the following key achievements have taken place:

##### **Principles 1 & 2 (Recruitment & Selection, Recognition & Value)**

- 1 The Strathclyde Pledge was launched in 2020 committing to achieving a year-on-year reduction in the percentage of our fixed-term staff who have more than three years' service. Working groups are in place to implement the Pledge commitments.
- 2 The Researchers' Group (RG), Strathclyde's Institutional Research Staff Association, provides representation on all relevant institutional committees and groups (including RKEC, RDSC and RDCSG) as well as Faculty Research Committees. The group is a key stakeholder in how Strathclyde supports the Career Development of our Researchers and a valued route to hearing the Researcher Voice.
- 3 A range of support, including advice and guidance from employment law and immigration specialists as well as individual support from HR where appropriate, was made available to all staff affected by Brexit.

##### **Principles 3, 4 & 5 (Support, Career Development and Researchers' Responsibilities)**

1. Responsibility for Research Staff development moved to OSDU in 2015 and is now fully-embedded within our Staff Development Programmes with between 50% - 60% of Strathclyde's Research Staff population engaging with OSDU's provision each year. Provision is continually reviewed and enhanced based on CEDARS, participant feedback and sector priorities, and as overseen by the RDSC.
2. Over 90% of CEDARS 2020 and 2021 respondents felt they were fairly treated in relation to access to training and development opportunities, significantly above the 2021 national average of 82%.
3. The RG organises seminars, one-off events, social events and the annual [StrathWide conference](#) to bring Researchers together as a community and to facilitate new collaborations. In 2020 and 2021, underpinned entirely by institutional resource, in order to drive unique interdisciplinary research engagements, the RG awarded £15.5K and £27.5K funding, respectively, to Researchers from across the University through the *StrathWide* fund.
4. A 'Thesis Mentoring Scheme' has been piloted, funded through a successful QAA 'Resilient Learning Communities' Enhancement Theme award, with Researchers gaining formal experience by mentoring Postgraduate Researchers.

## Principle 6 (Diversity & Equality)

1. [Strathclyde's Maternity Leave Policy](#) was updated in January 2021 with revisions beneficial for Researchers, including the removal of the requirement to return for a period of 3 months, reduction in the length of service to receive enhanced maternity pay and extensions where the birth results in a prolonged hospital stay. [Online guidance](#) has also been enhanced to provide an online pay calculator, a checklist with guidance for managers and employees, a works planning template and an FAQ section.
2. 20 out of 25 departments hold AthenaSWAN awards including a Faculty-level award for the Strathclyde Business School and a Silver award for Civil and Environmental Engineering. All departments are being supported to engage with the AthenaSWAN awards process.
3. Strathclyde hosts the [EPSRC Inclusion Matters 'STEM Equals' project](#) which examines working cultures within Higher Education and industry, including systemic inequalities faced by women and LGBT+ staff in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) disciplines. The STEM Equals team are embedded within the RD Concordat activities providing expert guidance in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) challenges as well as engaging with broader related Institutional Initiatives.

## Principle 7 (Implementation and Review)

1. An RD Concordat Officer was recruited in October 2020 to deliver the Gap Analysis and Action Plan.
2. Formal mechanisms are in place for monitoring progress on researcher development activities, the Concordat/EU HR Excellence in Research and the AthenaSWAN action plans through University Court, Senate, Executive Team, Staff Committee, RKEC, RDSC and the Researchers' Group.
3. CEDARS ran in 2020 and 2021 with the results reported to RDSC and relevant aspects reported to aligned initiatives such as the Equality & Diversity Committee and [Strathclyde Safe360](#) which targets incorporating safety into every area of University life.

## C) Next Steps and Focus of the Strategy for the Next Two Years

Our Strategy to support the Career Development of our Researchers over the next two years will be driven by the revised RD Concordat as well as related aspects of the Concordats for Research Integrity, Open Research Data, Public Engagement and our institutional strategies. This strategy, and the actions within it, were directly informed both by the Gap Analysis themes and outcomes as well as direct consideration of an extensive range of related institutional initiatives including, but not limited to, Research Integrity and KE Concordats, the People Strategy, Strathclyde Pledge, Strathclyde's Equality Outcomes and STEMEquals. It will be overseen by RDCSG and delivered through close collaboration with colleagues across the university as described in the accompanying 2022 – 2024 Action Plan. Our Strategy targets in particular areas where the Concordat's expectations have been strengthened and emerging sector-wide challenges have been introduced under five *key themes* with the following *Strategic Objectives*:

- I) **Implementation and Governance:** *Embed the Concordat implementation and progress across the Institution through effective governance, communication, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.*
- II) **Research Culture:** *Champion and embed a positive Research Culture across the Institution through bold, innovative, ambitious and collaborative approaches.*
- III) **Researcher Career Development and Progression:** *Embed time and recognition for Professional and Career Development activities as integral to the Strathclyde Researcher experience to support Researcher progression into successful, fulfilling careers across a range of employment sectors.*
- IV) **Managers of Researchers Training and Development:** *Support Managers of Researchers to be excellent, effective Leaders and Managers.*
- V) **Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making:** *Effectively engage Researchers and their Managers with Policy and Decision-Making to develop a thriving and inclusive research environment.*

## D) Success Measures

Our success will be measured and monitored in terms of timely achievement of the proposed actions in the 2022-2024 Action Plan. For each Strategic Objective, this will be captured through:

- Formation of appropriate working groups and confirmation of Concordat and Researcher representation within aligned committees and initiatives, as well as, where appropriate, identification of follow-up actions;
- Evidence of progress / improvement regarding views and perceptions of staff, collected through the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), when compared with previous years; and
- 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.