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**HR Excellence in Research Report 2021**

### **Introduction**

The University received the HR Excellence in Research (HREinR) Award in September 2011 and retained it in subsequent reviews in 2013, 2015 and 2019. This report and associated action plan outline our internal evaluation process, the successes driven by our action plan, and how these link to University priorities. The report also sets out the focus of our strategy for the next two years and the key measures of success which form the basis of an updated action plan for 2021-23.

Our key audience for this award is the research staff community which, at the time of writing, compromises 1015 members of staff falling either into the contractual category of “Research Only” or “Teaching and Research”.

### **Evaluation Process**

### The process of review and planning for the HREinR award is embedded as part of the University’s wider governance and reporting structures. The main entity responsible for overseeing this is the Career Development for Research Staff steering group (CDRS). CDRS already has a clear remit to promote the implementation throughout the organisation of the principles of another major sectoral standard relating to the personal and career development of research staff: The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (RDC). Reporting for the two accreditations is now closely aligned, so essentially the same set of responsibilities apply in relation to the HREinR award.

### CDRS is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Research, Knowledge Exchange and Wider Impact) with representatives from research staff, Research Staff Associations (RSAs), academic staff, Organisational and Professional Development (OPD), Human Resources (HR), the Careers Service (CS), and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I). It ultimately reports in turn to the senior University committee - Senate - via the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). A dedicated OPD Partner, along with the Head of OPD and the HR Manager (Operations) have the responsibility of ensuring that issues raised and decisions taken by CDRS are taken on board in the development of training provision and HR Policy respectively.

### The internal evaluation carried out for this reporting cycle included a careful review of progress against previous action plans with input from key stakeholders across the University. Quantitative and qualitative data was drawn from a wide variety of sources. These included:

### **The University Staff Survey (2019), CEDARS (2021)**

### The internal University survey carried out in 2019 included a section drawn from Vitae’s Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS), which is widely recognised across the sector. In 2021, the University took the decision not to run the survey again but rather to replace it with smaller pulse surveys. The CDRS committee also made the decision, however, to take part in the Culture, Environment and Development of Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) for the first time. This survey ran from May to June 2021. Analysis of CEDARS results is still ongoing and will inform future activity as determined by the CDRS committee. This activity will be monitored and reported in future action plans for both the HREinR Award and the revised RDC.

### **Feedback and booking data from the Researcher and Academic Development Programme within OPD**

OPD collects check in feedback as standard after all training workshops. This feedback, together with booking numbers collected via the online booking system provides a valuable source of insights into the priorities and needs of the researcher community at Dundee, as well as which key areas of development provision need to be better publicised.

* **CDRS and the RSAs**

The CDRS committee, previously mentioned within this report, offers an important means for research staff to interface with University management and professional services staff. As such, as well as having a direct role in shaping the HREinR action plan it also contains within itself a valuable source of qualitative information on the career development needs and views of researchers via the researcher representatives who sit upon it. In those Schools (to date, Life Sciences and Medicine) where Research Staff Associations have been set up, these also represented a key source of qualitative inputs which were submitted to CDRS and informed the creation of the action plan.

Drawing on these and other sources of data success measures and targets were drawn up which anchor our forward-looking plan.

### HREinR Ten-year review documentation was submitted to Vitae on 5/8/21 for feedback. Feedback was received and actioned before being returned to the CDRS committee for final approval.

### **Key achievements and progress against the 2019-21 action plan**

This section reviews and evaluates the key milestones in the University’s progress towards meeting the ambitions set out in the 2019-2021 action plan. The previous action plan had ambitious targets aimed at shaping and influencing the research culture at the University of Dundee. Some actions were postponed and rolled over to the new action plan due to the pandemic. To a large extent, however, actions have been completed, or weren’t applicable due to Covid-19. With the ambition for these actions still at the forefront of the University’s aim to improve research culture, incomplete actions, where appropriate, have been rolled over onto the new action plan.

**Key progress against Principles 1 and 2: Recruitment and Selection, Recognition and Value**

* **Between 2018/19-2020/21 79% of applications for promotion by research staff have been successful**

The University’s commitment to recognising and promoting talent within the research community is showcased in various ways with a commitment to training and development, career development and expectation for research staff to undertake additional research opportunities when they arise. The promotion of research staff is a particular area of focus for our HR &OD Directorate with new promotion criteria coming into place for staff in 2021. These were shaped by the research community by way of the CDRS group in early 2021. This illustrates the University’s commitment to ensuring the research community can feed into the policy and decision-making processes at the University of Dundee.

* **Since 2018 82% of research staff have completed an Objective Setting and Review (OSaR)**

Since the University Strategy was published in 2015, the University has been committed to “allowing our people to flourish”. The OSaR process is one way in which the University can monitor the progress of each staff member against their job description and outputs. The incorporation of a careers conversation section for research staff was introduced to allow for managers of research staff to fully understand the development needs and career aspirations of their research teams. The research manager now can share this part of the conversation with OPD, to allow for the Unit to understand the training needs of staff across the University.

**Key Progress against Principles 3 and 4: Support and Career Development**

* **In the 2019 Staff Survey 84% of research staff agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: *“I feel that I am given the same opportunities to develop as other staff” this represents an increase of 3% since the last staff survey.***
* **In the same Survey 82% of research staff reported that the agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: “I am satisfied with my current level of training and development” this represents an increase of 8% since the last staff survey.**

Since 2019 there has been a significant change in the University of Dundee’s approach to researcher development reflected in the appointment of a full time Organisational and Professional Development Partner specifically dedicated to research and academic development. In practice this is accomplished largely by coordinating and enhancing relevant provision on the OPD training programme which offers a wide range of training and development opportunities to all research and academic staff, with workshops mapped against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF). There are dedicated workshops in each RDF domain and most sub domains, as well as additional workshops targeting specific skills. In 2018/19 there were a total of 208 workshops, in 2019/20 there were a total of 173 workshops and in 2020/21 there was a total of 166 workshops dedicated to research staff. These figures reflect a deliberate policy of streamlining the programme for all staff to ensure quality over quantity of workshops while dynamically responding to emerging development needs. Furthermore, OPD have undertaken a full review of the Programme for 2021/22 with the view of delivering an up-to-date and responsive workshop programme alongside a bespoke set of Organisational Development (OD) activities targeting the specific needs of the university research community. Since early 2020 the OPD team has moved all the training and development content possible to be facilitated via online webinars and asynchronous training workshops/material.

* **Teaching Research and Academic Mentoring (TRAM) is a significant part of the career development and support the University offer research staff. There are currently 151 partnerships active across 7 different institutions in the UK and Ireland.**

The University's Training and Development Officer co-ordinates the TRAM scheme at the University of Dundee alongside institutional partners from across the UK and Ireland. The TRAM scheme aims to pair experienced academics (mentors) with colleagues at an earlier career stage (Mentees), to provide guidance and structured support. In 2018/19 there were 104 partnerships; in 2019/20 there were 100 partnerships and in 2020/21 there were 151 partnerships. In 2019 the scheme was expanded further to include the Trinity College Dublin Medical School. The scheme is going to be growing yet again in 2021 with the addition of Queen Margaret University as a partner of the scheme, increasing the number of institutional partners to seven. As well as TRAM there is an additional mentoring scheme exclusive to the University of Dundee, the Professional Development Mentoring Scheme (PDM). Over the four years this has been available a total of 38 research staff have participated, either to mentor, or to receive mentorship on generic professional development skills not exclusive to a career in academia or research.

**Key Progress against Principle 5: Researchers’ Responsibilities**

* **The University has two active Research Staff Associations (RSAs) that proactively engage their communities with personal and career development opportunities.**

The University is proud to support two very active RSAs. The School of Life Sciences RSA (SLSRSA) and the School of Medicine RSA (SoMRSA) are active in engaging research staff within their respective schools with career and professional development opportunities throughout the University and beyond. In early 2021 the SoMRSA was established to help engage research staff in the School during the pandemic. This allowed the two respective Schools to begin working collaboratively to the benefit of the research community at the University. In the summer of 2020, with the help of Alumni Relations and OPD, the RSAs created a new series of careers talks titled ‘Careers in Academia and Beyond’ to showcase career possibilities. This included talks from researchers who have moved into careers in journalism, commercialisation, publications and other areas. These events were open to all research staff at the University and had positive engagement. These talks continue to be the focus of this collaborative partnership between the two schools with more events taking place in the future.

* **The University is committed to excellence in research integrity. The Doctoral Academy run the University Research Integrity module which is a component for all postgraduate researchers and research staff. Since 2018 a total of 97% Postgraduate Researchers have undergone this training.**
* **The University established a Research Staff Forum (RSF) in early 2019 to help engage research staff from all schools to have a voice. This Forum meets every quarter and has representation from all School research communities.**

**Key Progress against Principle 6: Diversity and Equality**

* **In the 2019 Staff Survey 97% of research staff responded positively with either agree or strongly agree with the following statement: *I am aware of the University’s policy on equality and diversity*. This represents an increase of 3% from the last survey.**

The University has made significant progress in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) where it concerns research staff. This is recognised within the EDI Unit, with the Unit engaging with active research staff to conduct focus groups on how best to assess the impact of research by using the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Tool. From 2019, the EDI Unit collaborated with OPD in showcasing new items in the Research Staff newsletter that concern updates to EDI policy and process. Please see the University of Dundee’s [Race Equality Charter](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/equality-diversity/race-equality/about) and [Athena Swan](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/athena-swan).

**Key Progress against Principle 7: Implementation and Review**

* **In late 2020 the University made further commitments to the researcher community by creating a new permanent post moving the Researcher and academic Development Officer from a fixed term one-year post to a permanent post.**

As mentioned above, the University has created a permanent position within OPD in order to ensure ongoing capacity to coordinate actions required in relation to the HREinR award and the RDC, as well as overseeing the increasing development needs of the research community. This role moving forward will focus on all external awards as well as designing a bespoke training package to help promote the development of research staff. Increased OPD staffing in relation to this area is allowing for more and better supported organisational development in the researcher space, while also acting as a point of contact for all research staff in need of individual support.

**Next steps and forward-looking strategy for 2021-23**

The University of Dundee remains committed to the RDC and HREinR award and our action plans aim to progress and improve our research culture and to facilitate our decision-making process. The three defining principles of the RDC are core to the development of our research culture action plan and we are committed to ensuring an efficient execution of development areas in Environment and Culture, Employment and Professional and Career Development. The actions as laid out in our previous action plans that have not yet been completed or delayed due to extenuating circumstances have been rolled over to the new forward-looking action plan and this may be [viewed here](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/hr/hrexcellenceinresearch/). A summary of areas of focus are below:

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| **Environment and Culture** |
| * Increase number of staff with “some understanding” of RD Concordat from 23% to 30% according to CEDARS responses * Increase completion of online research integrity training from 50% to 70% in 2022, 80% in 2023 * 90% of managers of researchers to have completed online EDI training by June 2023 |
| **Employment** |
| * Increase number of researchers reporting “useful” or” very useful” School level inductions by 10% to 80% and halve number of those who say they were not offered an induction at this level * Conduct a training needs analysis looking at leadership and management training for researchers |
| **Professional and Career Development** |
| * Increase participation in OSaRs from 85% - 90% and improve participation in OSaR training by researchers by at least 50%. * Introduce new measures to access comprehensive data on researcher uptake of one-on-one careers advice sessions and use this to target a significant improvement. |