Case number: 2019UK403910
Name Organisation under review: TUoS - The University of Sheffield
Organisation's contact details: Western Bank, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S10 2TN

Action Plan

External scrutiny
The University of Sheffield is committed to providing a thriving research environment that contributes to global changes. Alongside the HRS4R, we are also signatories of DORA, the 'San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment', which supports our recruitment practices to look at the individual in the round, rather than solely take a metric approach to measuring success. The institution holds the Athena Swan Silver award, evidencing our commitment and success in advancing gender equality in Higher Education and Research. We are signatories to the UK Concordats for Research Integrity, the Career Development of Researchers and Public Engagement. Our PhD programmes are approved and assured by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Internal review
We run an organisational staff survey every two years, providing all staff, including researchers the opportunity to feedback about their job, manager, working conditions and leadership. R1 researchers are consulted using the national 'Postgraduate Research Experience Survey' which reviews all aspects of the PGR experience including wellbeing, supervision and research culture. This gap analysis process has afforded The University of Sheffield the opportunity to compile a meaningful and ambitious action plan for the next three years. We recognise that we have excellent practice in many areas but also have aspects of our research environment that could be enhanced. Key reflections, on both strengths and weaknesses, are detailed below under the four thematic headings of the Charter & Code.

Ethical & Professional Aspects
The University has an established governance-based approach to all aspects of research ethics and integrity, driven by the University's Research Ethics Committee which is responsible for processes and policy in relation to research professionalism. This has, in recent years, led to development of an online ethics application policy and structures for Departmental rigour for all student projects from undergraduate to Masters and formal application methods for funded research. To develop early rigorous practices, a compulsory module for all research students was introduced in 2012. One of our focus areas as part of this action plan is to formally review this module to ensure it covers a wider range of key areas, including research data management and pathways to impact consideration.

In recent years we have developed policy and central support for issues of open access and data related issues and have been part of cross-institutional initiatives in relation to publishing through White Rose online. We are looking to expand this through exploration of the developments needed to publish monographs as open access.

The University recognises its excellent practice in regard to partnership working and public engagement, which has been developed over a number of years. The UK research landscape changes pose new opportunities for practice growth and so we now look to develop our strategy in delivery in two key areas (1) IP/Commercialisation, particularly for earlier intervention and training support to raise awareness of terminology and opportunities and to complement (2) knowledge exchange, which until now has been led by engaged individuals, rather than brought together under a coherent strategy supported by specialist advice and training.

Recruitment & Selection

During 2018/2019 the University's Postgraduate Researcher (PGR/R1) Committee has instigated five work-streams to review all aspects of the R1 level researcher at our institution. These work streams are exploring recruitment, harmonisation of processes, expectations of the PhD, development and wellbeing. There has been a lot of change in the UK research sector and by default to the PhD in recent years and the University has been bold in undertaking such a critical self-reflection. Direct impact on the recruitment and selection processes for PhDs will be forthcoming during the first year of this plan, where criteria to be selected against will be harmonised, as will the messages and expectations provided to prospective students.

In the R2/R3 space, the Research Staff Development Committee (that oversees this plan) has led a project to harmonise the text that goes in to all adverts that makes clear to prospective candidates what support and enrichment they can expect when they come to join the University. This has been fed in to a wider talent strategy review at the institution and will be incorporated in to new procedures in regard to recruitment methods.

Working Conditions and Social Security

Over the last two years, through extensive consultation and co-development with academic colleagues, the University has proudly launched a revised pathway for academic career development and promotion. The 'Academic Career Pathway' is a transparent framework that links to appraisal and reward and makes clear transition points and the skills required to navigate them. The thorough approach, led by Human Resources, to go direct to individuals and groups for achievement of this piece led to production of a robust career management tool for R3 and R4 researchers that can also be utilised by R1 and R2 researchers looking to remain in academia.

In respect of R2s, the Research Staff Development Committee led a project in 2017 to enable extended access to resources (email, library, key data drives) for fixed term researchers to better support job continuity and an ongoing career in research. This opportunity is R2 led, something that can be requested to help with the continuation of research output that supports their career - it is not for R4 researchers to use to enforce continued contribution post exit. Support for career awareness and choice beyond academia is equally supported through the University's 'v i s t a' offering which includes access to mentors in a variety of employment post PhD as well as 100+ blog stories from PhDs in careers beyond academia.

The University's Women Academic Returners' Programme (WARP) ensures that all women at the University of Sheffield are able to have maternity cover for all or part of their role whilst on maternity leave.

Whilst we have been able to improve many areas of practice in the employment of researchers, the two most challenging areas have been those of fixed term contracts related to research funding and casual contracts for the delivery of teaching modules (often but not

always delivered by aspiring researchers). We are committed to exploring in more depth the structures that we have in place as an institution in regard to these two contract types and to consulting on alternative strategies with constituent groups.

The University also commits to undertaking a formal review of the development offered to researchers by formalising a researcher development strategy that makes provision available tailored to strategic goals and accessible to all researchers.

Training and Development
All staff have access to annual 'Staff Review and Development' (SRDS) appraisal and for researchers, the SRDS process has been adapted to review key aspects of performance in the round including development, teaching, administration and research output. Researchers at all career stages have access to the award winning Think Ahead framework which supports individual career ambitions within and beyond academia. This includes access to career appropriate mentoring and development activity that scaffolds personal development and exceptional achievement at work.

The University also offers the internationally renowned 'Sheffield Leader' programme enabling personal and professional capacity building in terms of leadership, management and personal skills.

Wellbeing of staff and students is of paramount importance to the University of Sheffield and as such, in 2018 it launched a formal strategy designed to enable, "every individual to achieve their maximum mental wellbeing resilience so that they can realise their own potential, cope with the normal stresses of life and can work productively and fruitfully."

Arising from the aforementioned review of the PhD/R1 experience at the University of Sheffield, we will put in place activity to reduce isolation and to enable better discussion and agreement of expectations between R1 researchers and their supervisors. A compulsory supervision development offer will be designed and provided to supervisors in terms of core practice, support for wellbeing and personal development in terms of research career ambitions.

University of Sheffield HRS4R Action Plan 2019-2022

Charter & Code ref	Action title	Timing	Lead Dept.	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
2.	Review & re-launch of the Research Ethics & Integrity compulsory module for R1s to make it more accessible Expand the remit to consider Responsible Research & Innovation, inc. reliability, reproducibility and core data skills.	Autumn 2020	Research Services / Faculties	90% completion by all R1s by the end of their 3rd year and online version available in all Faculties.

8.	Broaden the internal University open access support and expertise beyond journal articles.	Summer 2020	University Library	Partnership within the White Rose University Press. Exploration of monographs being published open access on this platform.
8.	IP & commercialisation training at all career stages.	Autumn 2020	Research Services	Existence of a training offer for researchers in relation to IP & commercialisation.
8.	Develop a Knowledge Exchange (KE) Strategy across the whole institution, which considers reward and recognition methods for researchers who engage positively with KE activity.	Spring 2020	Partnerships and Regional Engagement	Existence of a KE strategy that engages researchers at all career stages across the entire KE spectrum.
11.	Review & re-launch the Training Needs Analysis process for R1s to increase meaningful engagement and record keeping.	Autumn 2020	Faculties	Ability to record TNAs consistently across the institution A shorter and more meaningful process and form.
11.	Increase R2&R3 engagement with the annual SRDS appraisal process.	Autumn 2019 + Autumn 2020 + Autumn 2021	Host depts. supported by HR	More than 80% of R2&R3 completing SRDS process. Publicised recommendation for the option to be given for this to be led by someone other than the Principal Investigator.
12.	Review and issuance of guidance for the recruitment of R1s. Guidance to also form part of mandatory supervisor training.	Autumn 2019	Research Services	Guidance published and made available across the institution. Mandatory training materials updated to reflect the guidance.
13.	Specific text in job adverts (ATJs) for R2 & R3 posts detailing the specific support available to that staff group in regard to career development, that includes HRS4R logo.	Autumn 2019	HR	All ATJs for R2s include the text. Core templates are routinely utilised by Departments.
17.	Provide guidance for potential applicants on quality CV construction.	Autumn 2019	HR	Guidance published on HR webpages, utilising expertise from other University services.

21.	Use of consistent job advert text in respect of researcher appointments.	Autumn 2019	RSDC / HR	Job advert templates revised and being utilised.
25.	Exploration of the viability of open-ended contracts (linked to funding) for researchers on grant funding lasting more than two years.	Autumn 2020	HR / Depts.	A formal exploration paper completed and provided to University Executive Board for consideration.
25.	Reduction in the use of casual contracts for the delivery of teaching commitments.	Spring 2020	HR / Depts	Number of casual contracts for teaching below 20%.
27.	Delivery of the University's existing gender pay gap action plan.	Spring 2020	HR / Depts.	Achievement of the actions detailed in the plan.
28.	Creation of a University-wide researcher development strategy.	Spring 2020	Research Services	Existence of a strategy.
31.	Creation of more specific website guidance on IP ownership and negotiation of ownership, to clearly articulate these policies to researchers.	Spring 2020	Research Services	Existence and use of the guidance.
32.	Availability of an online tool to enable the raising of concerns around research misconduct.	Autumn 2019	Research Services	Existence of the online tool.
33.	Availability of a development mechanism that recognises R2 contribution to teaching.	Summer 2019	Research Services	Existence of a piloted and reviewed development scheme for Associate Supervisors.
36. & 39.	A full review of the training and support provided for R1 researchers with an aim to improve conditions and practices.	Spring 2020	Research Services & UPGRC	Revised policy and practice in relation to supervision, R1 training and supervisor development.

37.	Provision of line management training / development for R3/R4 researchers.	Spring 2021	HR & Research Services	Access to online and face to face content for line managers of researchers.
38.	A specific development provision for aspiring researcher Fellows (R2-R3).	Spring 2020	Research Services	A cohort model development provision including peer support.
40.	Coordinated supervisor development.	Spring 2020	Research Services	A core online module for all supervisors highlighting key practices in relation to R1 supervision. A cohesive seminar and practice sharing series in place.