

# **GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY (GCU)**

## **HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD: INTERNAL REVIEW REPORT (2019-2022)**

Since GCU received the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) from the European Commission in November 2013, monitoring and evaluation of the actions have been part of a continuous process. As we near the end of year nine, our progress for our 8-year review is outlined below.

GCU was originally in Cohort 9 for the HREiR Award with the 8-year review due Nov 2021. With the advent of GCU becoming signatory to the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Researcher Development (RD) Concordat) on 1 July 2021 and the requirement to produce a RD Concordat Action Plan for 1 July 2022, GCU made a successful request to Vitae to move to Cohort 10 for the HREiR Award with the 8-year review due 7 July 2022. GCU has now aligned the annual review and reporting on the RD Concordat Action Plan to Court by 1 July each year, with the now three-year review cycle of the HREiR Award review forward plan to occur by 7 July every 3 years. One of the agreements in moving to the Cohort 10 timeframe was to include in this internal review, review of the last three years, instead of two, hence this internal review report covers 2019 to 2022.

### **1. HOW WAS THE INTERNAL EVALUATION UNDERTAKEN?**

A review of progress made in relation to the action plan developed in 2019 has been conducted, and findings have been discussed across the university spectrum, including strategic research leaders, research staff and administrative leads, People Services (PS), Research Innovation Office (RIO), the REF Management Group (RMG), University Research Committee (URC), the Graduate School (GS), the university's Equality and Diversity (E&D) Forum, the Research Directorate, the Schools - the Associate Deans of Research (ADRs), School Research Committees, School Research Centres/groups, GCU London research hub, and the Yunus Centre. The review and forward planning and the submission for the HREiR Award are developed by researchers, through the GS leadership and under the university executive lead Pro Vice Chancellor Research and oversight of the University Executive. It is a researcher-led activity, working closely in partnership with People Services.

#### **Target audience for the Concordat**

Our Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are central to the review and forward planning in upholding the obligations of the RD Concordat. In 2018, GCU established an ECR group across the university, with local ECR groups in Schools and Research Centres. We agreed a GCU ECR definition of: 1) anyone 5 – 10 years post-PhD excluding staff who may have a recent PhD but are obviously well-established in research track records; 2) staff within 5 years of appointment, currently undertaking a PhD; 3) staff within 5-10 years of a ProfDoc award with a proven record of publication.

As of July 2022, we have 115 GCU ECRs. Their staff categories are: 17% Researcher 1a/1b, 15% Research Fellow, 64% Lecturer and 4% Other. This compares with 94 GCU ECRs in 2018.

GCU has a commitment to reduce the use of fixed-term contracts. GCU is also committed that our contract Research staff (Researcher 1a/1b, Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow) are fully connected and integrated with our academic research staff communities. As of July 2022, GCU has 90 Research staff (including the Senior Research Fellow group not in the ECR group) and 651 Research and Teaching academic staff. Of the Research and Teaching staff group, GCU has identified 230 who are designated with carrying out Significant Research (Sig Res) and who were submitted to the Research Excellence Framework exercise in 2021.

The HREiR Action Plan is for GCU's researchers in the categories of contract Research staff (all) and Research and Teaching staff (230 Sig Res staff and those additional of the 651 total who are developing their research careers). The action plan has a particular focus on providing for GCU ECRs (all).

## **ECR governance and ECR culture and community**

Our governance structure is inclusive and encouraging of local ECR groups and promotes the sharing of specific activities and events. There is a three-way interaction between 1) University level/Graduate School 2) the Developing Academic Researcher Excellence (DARE) Steering Group and 3) School/Centre-level local groups.

GCU is committed to DARE, a focussed and action-orientated group which oversees progress in all areas of the HR award. The DARE Group is a formal sub-committee of the University Research Committee (URC). DARE oversees the university network of 115 ECRs, comprising of ECR local groups in Schools and Research Centres, meeting locally as well as University-wide. DARE is coordinated by the Graduate School but run by ECR representatives from each of our Schools and Research Centres. DARE also has representation from the Professional Service Departments of People Services (PS), Graduate School (GS), Research Innovation Office (RIO) and Governance. DARE's focus is on overseeing progress and ensuring delivery in all areas of the RD Concordat and HR Excellence in Research Award action plan.

From 2021 DARE includes the growing GCU London campus research hub and the representation from People Services (PS) of two areas – standard HR business partnership and EDI partnership. The partnerships in DARE ensure that the obligations and actions under the three Principles of the RD Concordat are enabled and included in the Operational Plans of School and Professional Service departments and in their annual forward planning.

### **How researchers' views were taken into account and how the review links with the RD Concordat Action Review**

The actions in our 2019-2022 plan build on existing excellence in the support of emerging researchers. The University-level ECR group, the local ECR groups and the DARE steering group have played an integral part in evolving and reviewing this plan throughout 2019 to 2022, in taking ownership of it, and in developing the forward plan for 2022 – 2025.

In November 2020, an RD Concordat gap analysis was undertaken under the auspices of the DARE steering group. The gap analysis was firstly drafted by a small DARE working group, with representatives from the GS, RIO, Governance and PS. For each of the new institutional requirements of the RD Concordat, the relevant Professional Services Departments provided their gap analysis. They gave a brief summary of the current situation at GCU, the actions currently being taken, the actions proposed from their operational plans 2021/22 and any gaps in GCU provision and plans. ECRs were also consulted as to their experience of the GCU policies and practice and any gaps. Actions to address the gaps were included in the HREiR action plan 2019 – 2022 in March 2021.

For the RD Concordat forward plan, actions were compiled under emerging key priority themes. These priority areas have been identified from discussions with researchers across disciplines and across the research career levels. GCU has made a strategic choice to focus on delivering a small number of key priority areas in the RD Concordat rather than have actions for every obligation. The emerging key GCU priority themes match closely the themes identified and included in the new HREiR Forward action plan template. This made it possible for the GCU RD Concordat Action plan and the GCU HREiR Forward action plan to be the same. This plan will continue to evolve as GCU researchers evaluate the findings of successive CEDARS surveys run biennially in 2021, 2023 and 2025. Cross-university working groups with Schools' and Professional Services Departments' membership will develop the high-level actions in the HREiR forward plan into actions in the annual RD concordat action plans and reports. These actions are expected to broadly follow: year 1) exploring and understanding the complex issues involved and evaluating solutions; year 2) designing interventions, piloting activities and evaluating their success; year 3) rolling out and embedding solutions across the university. Progress will be monitored via the DARE Steering Group and the URC, with final reporting and next year's plan given for consideration and approval to Senate each year in May and to Court each year in June. The next HREiR review in 2025 will include the annual reviewing and planning of the RD Concordat action plan.

## **2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE ORIGINAL ACTION PLAN – 2019 to 2022**

The original action plan was set out in alignment with the revised Concordat obligations and key achievements are reported against each of these below. The actions for the RD Concordat obligations ECI3, E13, E15 and PCDI2 have been added from the RD Concordat gap analysis in March 2021.

### **Environment and Culture**

Promotion of the RD Concordat and related consultations with ECR local groups and GCU researchers resulted in GCU becoming a signatory 1 July 2021. Researcher awareness of the Concordat was successfully raised to 61% of respondents in CEDARS 2021. GCU is ranked fourth in the world and first in the UK for promoting gender equality, in the top 5% globally for social impact, and first in Scotland for health and wellbeing, and reduced inequalities for which we are also ranked 21st in the world (THE, 2022). GCU has successfully obtained institutional Silver Athena Swan accreditation; with SCEBE Silver; GSBS Bronze (both May 2021); and SHLS Bronze (August 2021).

230 of GCU staff were returned in the REF 2021 as having Significant Research in their roles (Sig Res). GCU is unsurpassed by any other Scottish modern university for the level of research (72%) considered to be world leading or internationally excellent. Our health research is only surpassed by King's College London for outstanding impact, and 100% of our communications, culture and media research is rated as having an outstanding or very considerable impact (REF2021).

Implementation of the Tackling Racism recommendations has led to: the launching of the Call it Racism campaign to staff and students; the launch of 'Report and Support' tool for staff and students to report incidents of racism, supported by anti-racist training for staff involved in handling complaints; completion of Union Black anti-racism training pilot by specially invited cohorts, including Senior Managers.

Essential training in Mental Health Awareness, in partnership with the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) has been made available to all staff, including Research staff. Online training modules covering 'Roles, responsibilities, boundaries and maintaining wellbeing' and 'Fostering a mentally healthy workplace' delivered by GCU staff and SAMH's (Scottish Association of Mental Health) Mentally Healthy University Coordinator ran Oct 2020 to April 2022 with targeted communications to Research Staff and Supervisors. The CEDARS question 25 on managerial confidence to use inclusive, equitable and transparent recruitment processes, report very positive measures of the success of actions with 2021 92% (2020 94%) are confident. The CEDARS question 26 report that 60% of managers had undertaken training in Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) in 2021.

The new CEDARS survey was successfully piloted in 2020 during the pandemic lockdown and delivered again in 2021, increasing the response rate from 28% in 2020 to 34% in 2021. A full CEDARS reporting and analysis was designed that provides comparison to (a) the baseline of 2020 and (b) benchmarking against the UK 2021 and further drill down examination of the results by gender, research career level and by Schools/Research Centre.

### **Employment**

In the recruitment, selection and appointment processes, CEDARS question 19 shows GCU does very well and significantly higher than the national benchmarks for all four elements: fair, inclusive, transparent and merit-based. The mean % agreement is 92% in 2021 (89% in 2020) and is 12 pp above the UK 2021 mean. The approach to the recruitment of PGR students to casual hours teaching has been standardised, including advertising appropriate opportunities via Student Careers.

All staff new to GCU, including Research staff, are invited to corporate induction, and have access to the New Staff Induction materials on the staff intranet. All new research staff are assigned an account in the University's Current Research Information System, PURE. Research managers are included in the People Passport training and the Transformational Leadership Programme (TLP) for line managers. The People Passport provides an overview of policies and processes and the overall role of line management. The TLP is a developmental leadership programme.

## Professional and Career Development

The DARE to Lead RD Programme for ECRs and established researchers was developed and delivered fully online. Workshops from experts within GCU were delivered on: Conducting safe and effective digital Research; Data protection legislation for researchers; Textual, media & virtual qualitative data collection; Open access publishing for researchers; Research Data management; Research ethics for online research. New priorities were identified: Leadership, Funders and Grant writing, with workshops delivered online.

The GS designed and delivered its How to be an Effective Doctoral supervisor series online offered in a flexible work pattern for staff working remotely. Attendance by staff researchers at online GS supervision workshops was high, with 173 attendances in 2021/22 (155 in 2020/21) and with overall recommendation rates of 100%. Uptake of supervisor workshops has trebled from 2019 since the workshop series has moved online. Schools have active policies to encourage inclusion of ECRs on supervisory teams. From CEDARS q16.4, 58% of respondents in 2021 (2020 29%, 2021 UK 45%) felt GCU valued their contributions to supervising students. This showed good success of the interventions with an increase of 29 pp over 2020 and 13 pp above the UK average. The online delivery has been a huge success, and will continue to be offered online with some on campus delivery.

The GS Writing Retreats to encourage writing of Journal papers or thesis has grown year on year since they went online in 2020, now at 352 attendances in 2021/22. GCU Academic Development provided a series of workshops, resources and toolkits for developing teaching skills online. From CEDARS, the percentage of CEDARS respondents who felt GCU valued their contributions: q15.3, to publications showed good increase at 2021 63% (2020 42%, 2021 UK 66%); and q16.5, to teaching and learning showed particularly high increases at 2021 70% (2020 56%, 2021 UK 54%), with teaching being also 16 pp above the UK average.

The Research Staff Mentoring Programme launched in 2022 with 12 successful matches in this first year. GCU was successfully granted the Scottish Mentoring Award for its mentoring schemes for staff in teaching, research and organisational development.

From CEDARS q25, managers of researchers scored their confidence in their abilities in all the areas relatively high in the range of 65% (dealing with poor performance) to 99% (acknowledging good performance). These were well above the UK average in the areas of: Deal with poor performance of researchers (65%, +11 pp above UK); Respond to any issues relating to health and wellbeing (86%, +7 pp above UK); and Manage requests for flexible working appropriately (80%, +5 pp above UK).

From CEDARS q30, 73% of researchers agree/strongly agree their manager/supervisor encourages them to engage in personal and career development activities, an increase of 11 pp over 2020 and on the same level as the UK 2021 benchmark.

### 3. NEXT STEPS AND FOCUS OF FUTURE STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS, INCLUDING SUCCESS MEASURES

The broad strategy and focus for the next 3 years is summarised below. The HREiR/RD Concordat forward action plan sets out where actions are carried forward from the previous three years but also identifies new areas of focus.

The plan is focused around a small number of themes that have emerged as being of key priority going forward. These themes listed under the three RD concordat principles are:

- |                                       |                                     |   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Environment and Culture</b>     | <b>2. Employment</b>                | <b>3. Professional and Career Development</b> |
| 1.1 Wellbeing and mental health       | 2.1 Recruitment and induction       | 3.1 Championing professional development      |
| 1.2 Bullying and harassment           | 2.2 Recognition, reward & promotion | 3.2 Career development support and planning   |
| 1.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion | 2.3 People management               | 3.3. Research identity and leadership         |
|                                       |                                     | 3.4 Diverse careers                           |

Particular obligations under each theme have been prioritised and actions to improve are indicated with timescales expected, the lead(s) responsible for delivery identified and success measures of the actions provided.

A number of the areas for action identified for researchers, have also been identified as key for staff across the university, in the recent Staff Engagement Survey 2022 (May 2022). These actions have been identified in the HREiR/RD Concordat forward action plan with an asterisk. Actions that relate to the wider staff population will be included in the relevant Professional Service Departments' Operational plans and involve exploration of solutions with cross-university stakeholders, including researchers. In this way, rather than separate action plans being devised by the different stakeholders to respond to the CEDARS 2021 and Staff Engagement Survey 2022 results, the university through a lead department such as People Services will seek cross-university feedback on a few key identified areas and consider actions or interventions.

Success measures include:

- A stronger research base indicated by increasing numbers of research active staff operating at higher levels of independently assessed research quality. ie increased numbers of Sig Res staff and improved REF results.
- Successful delivery of over 150 different workshops for PGR, supervisors and staff, with continued increase in uptake and the highest satisfaction rates of 99%.
- DARE to Lead researcher development programme, researcher-led designed and delivered to cohorts of staff.
- A strengthened research culture and environment through collaborations on events and development opportunities cross university between Graduate School and ECR local groups and GS researcher networks.
- Increased uptake in participation in GCU PgRES, CEDARS surveys.
- Continued improved GCU PgRES and CEDARS survey indicators in comparison to the benchmarking groups (Post 92, Scottish and UK) and previous years' results.