

### Research Culture

**Research culture encompasses the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of our research communities. It influences researchers' career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated' The Royal Society.**

The #UHResDev23 conference was our 5<sup>th</sup> Researcher Development Conference and the first one over two days – offering face-to-face introduction, workshops and networking lunch and online keynotes and workshop and posters. This approach was well received.

**Professor John Senior, Pro Vice-Chancellor** (Research and Enterprise) opened the with an outline of the research culture at UH, focusing on some of our unique advantages, which include: the Researcher Development Group (RDG) led by an academic and an HR training specialist; the biennial Researcher Development Conference and Skill-up! funding each year for bespoke researcher development. We first obtained the Vitae HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR Award) in 2010, in the second cohort, and we are currently awaiting the outcome of our 12-year review. The career pathways for researchers at UH do not depend on the availability of high-level posts, but on applicants reaching the criteria for promotion. The Research Information System we adopted early, is now widespread in use across the UK & Europe and provides dedicated storage for research groups. Our Doctoral College PGR Student Experience 2021 was 10th for overall satisfaction, with a participation rate of 56% (compared with national of 36%). UH is unique in having fourteen Professional Doctorates. We had very successful Research Impact outcome in REF2021 with best performance of all post-92 Sector (rank 32nd) and we have a systematic strategy of developing Impact through support from central team, together with annual round of small grants (up to £7.5k) to develop and evidence impact. Professor Jonathan Morris has just been appointed as Director of Research Culture and Environment.

**Dr Liz White, Chair of the Researcher Development Group**, welcomed researchers and researcher developers to the conference on behalf of the Researcher Development Group which is made of early career researchers from each school, an Associate Dean Research and representatives from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Human Resources, Careers and Employment and the Research Office. The Researcher Development Group decided the content with the theme of Research Culture. We considered some of the ways in which the university is working to develop the research culture, provide researchers' a voice in decision making, and diversify the workforce. Finally, participants were encouraged to complete the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) to feedback on the provision of support, providing direction for our action planning going forward.

**Skill-up! Award recipients Julia Petty and Natalie Pattison** shared how they had benefitted by the Skill-up! funding they received last year, and several other Skill-up! award winning bids were shared giving a picture of a broad and creative set of bids to inspire future applicants. Our thanks were given to the PVCr and HR for their joint funding of this scheme.

This introduction was rated as useful to very useful by 88% of respondents. A new member of staff commented that it was particularly useful.

Parallel sessions followed a networking lunch which was very well received by participants, appreciating the opportunity to meet face to face with colleagues from other Schools.

- How can we support you? - Mohammed Ilyas & Julia Ratcliffe
- Developing the impact of your research - Bridget Russell
- Research funding for ECR & Mid-career researchers - Research Office
- Exploring Knowledge Exchange and Impact - Yanina Aubrey-Gimenez
- Career options after research - Mary Baldwin and Ruth Baker (workshop ran online on Tuesday morning)

Our first keynote speakers were **Prof Mark Reed and Dr Joyce Reed of Fast Track Impact on 'The Resilient Researcher'** in response to the UCU statistic on mental and physical health challenges across the sector. Burnout is increasingly endemic, and there is a need to do something about this. This presentation was evidence-based from the research literature, and provided us with a kind of an inside out bottom up framework that started by asking a question that we don't typically ask ourselves, 'what is it that we love most about our work?' Then we considered what is implicit in our answers about our identities – maybe we are helpers; facilitators; explorers; adventurers. Underneath those identities, values like curiosity, creativity, that drive that sense of endless fascination and exploration in our research. Then, looking beneath even that, to get a sense of the meaning and purpose we derive from work. What is it that makes us tick? What is it that gets us up on that Monday morning? What is it that keeps us going through the dark times? Our purpose is the foundation of the kind of culture in which we will feel like we belong and a nurturing culture in which we feel at home. Culture is how we co-construct meaning from work. Building a more compassionate culture is a foundation for our resilience.

Joyce then explained how a coaching conversation can help us, and shared two tools that we could start to use straight away. The first being self-compassion, and the second being a wheel & hub metaphor which emphasised the need to look after the hub so that the spokes stay connected and the wheel can continue to work. Then Joyce & Mark modelled a coaching conversation to show how coaching works in action.

This was rated a useful to very useful by 88% of evaluation form respondents and feedback included that it was very helpful and very timely, and several respondents rating this the most useful part of the conference.

Our second keynote speaker was **Prof Jonathan Morris on evaluating our research, with a viewpoint on Research Assessment**. Jonathan outlined the importance of research culture and environment, in his new role as Director of Research Culture and Environment; the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA) which we will be signing up to; and current funding calls and evaluation processes and the way that UH is looking to ensure transparency and inclusivity in these. The UKRI have outlined the following components of research culture: positive research and innovation culture, equality, diversity and inclusion, bullying and harassment, Open Research (led by our Research and Scholarly Communications team), research integrity and preventing harm in research and innovation (responsible research) which are both dealt with through ethics at UH. Jonathan updated us on the Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP), emphasising that nothing would replace reading through outputs to make judgements on quality. The recommendations are to use explicit criteria for hiring, tenure and promotion decisions, and to consider the value and impact of all sorts of research outputs. We were reminded of the importance of citing primary literature – to give credit where credit is due. The Central Executive Group (CEG) has approved the implementation of the recommendations to become complicit with DORA. Now we will have training and awareness raising, all recruitment and

promotion materials will be reviewed to make sure that metrics do not impinge on decision making processes. Jonathan then shared about the UKRI future leader fellowships competition and how applications will be dealt with in an equitable way, and the UH harmonised impact funding call which is closing on 15 May.

This was rated a useful to very useful by 83% of evaluation form respondents and feedback included that it was clear and engaging, with helpful content.

The organisation of the conference through use of a HertsHub page was very successful and thanks expressed to the RDG for organising the conference. Only 39 staff attended over the two days, which was disappointing, however recordings of the [Keynotes](#) are available, and we encourage staff to access these.