

SETU Human Resource Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

**Progress Report:
September 2021 – August 2022**

SETU (Waterford), September, 2022



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Ollscoil
Teicneolaíochta
an Oirdheiscirt

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1. Foreward

Our research community members are a crucial and highly valued part of the dynamic and thriving research environment here at SETU, contributing to our international standing and reputation. In order to remain attractive and competitive we fully recognise the need to have the highest quality support and development for this key group of staff. Over the past eight years, through the focus on the Human Resource Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) we have invested in strengthening our research environment to be more inclusive, enabling and informed by best practice. We have considerably advanced our research policies, protocols and development supports for members of our research community. We have implemented a number of formal and informal initiatives, which have shaped the development of a positive research culture at the University.

Our HRS4R aim is to be a leading research informed HEI with a flourishing research culture of highly skilled and empowered researchers who have been fully equipped with making informed professional development choices whilst contributing to their chosen discipline and the wider Institute community. It is with great pleasure that we have put together this report highlighting our HRS4R achievements during the 2021-2022 academic year and outline future plans.

2. Diversity – Fostering Our Research Community

We strongly believe that diversity, equality, and inclusiveness enriches the calibre of our research. Multidisciplinary research is strongly supported at the University and we strive to create diverse teams to help ensure that our research incorporates many research disciplines and perspectives. SETU (Waterford) researchers hail from over 19 countries. Our research community members are diverse in terms of nationality, education, talent, political and ideological outlook, cultural and societal experiences, as well as race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and the many other attributes that make us all truly unique. All of our individual researchers are part of a collective research community and contribute to the fabric of life at the University in so many invaluable ways.

3. Our HRS4R Journey At A Glance

SETU actively supports the growth and success of every member of our research community. We are committed to providing all researchers from early career researchers to senior principal investigators with key opportunities to develop in their roles, grow in their careers, and engage in our diverse and inclusive research community. HRS4R has been a catalyst to help us achieve these ambitions.

MAY 2014	WIT first gained the HR Excellence In Research award
JULY 2017	WIT retained the award at the two year stage
JULY 2021	WIT retained the award at the Renewal Phase

4. The Internal Review Process

In 2014, an oversight committee “HRS4R Monitoring Committee” and an implementation committee “HRS4R Operational Committee” were established to ensure the successful embedding of the “Charter and Code” principles into the Institute’s organisational culture, along with the effective implementation of the actions arising from the HRS4R Action Plans.

5. Consultation Is Key

Consultation with stakeholders formed and continues to be a vital component in implementing our Action Plans. To date, consultation comprised a variety of methods including one-to-one conversations, focus groups, opinion surveys and open forums. Issues such as career development for research staff, promoting a positive research culture, recruitment and selection and further research supports were discussed. Ideas and opinions gathered, informed the content of the HRS4R Action Plans as well as the development of WIT's Research Strategy "Research Fusion- A Strategy for Connected Impactful Research 2020-2023". The nurturing of researchers' careers, developing research leaders, implementation of OTM-R, the provision of adequate professional development opportunities for researchers and EDI in research are the cornerstone of our HRS4R Action Plan (2020-2023).

The HRS4R Operational Committee assists with implementation of HRS4R at SETU, providing guidance and direction for the achievement of HRS4R objectives identified in the HRS4R Action Plan 2020-2023, making recommendations to the HRS4R Monitoring Committee as appropriate. The committee met twice during Sept 2021-June 2022. Their commitment to HRS4R activity was crucial in increasing awareness of the HRS4R Action Plans and progress amongst the researcher community; contributing towards review and discussion of actions completed; and sharing ideas and best practice for actions in progress.



6. Year At A Glance (2021–2022)

Our action plans for the (2020–2023) period includes a number of ambitious targets, against which significant progress has been made. SETU (Waterford) retained the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2021 following a two-day long assessment, by the European Commission, consisting of a host of virtual panel reviews with various researchers and senior leaders. External assessors paid great tribute to SETU Waterford’s dedication to the HRS4R process stating in the official assessment report that:

“WIT has proven that HRS4R is taken seriously within the institution and researchers interviewed acknowledge a cultural change provoked by the strategy. WIT is a great institution with a friendly atmosphere, where openness to each other is encouraged, and researchers are free and open to express their thoughts, which are heard. In 6 years, WIT has become a prime example of HRS4R implementation. The new action plan is coherent with the work done so far and is the fruit of a successful assessment in which all stakeholders have participated, the organization aimed and succeeded at a very high standard”. This award renewal recognises our continuing commitment to implementing systems and practices supportive of researchers’ career development in line with the “Charter and Code”.

Some brief highlights achieved this past academic year includes an increase in wellbeing support across the university, increased training and development opportunities for the researcher community including at PGR/ECR level, and increased opportunities for supervisory/mentorship development, some details are captured below:

6.1 Ethical & Professional Aspects

To complement the ‘in person’ opportunities for development available through our Broaden Your Horizons Researcher Development Programme, we once again offered the EPIGEUM Research Skills Toolkit online learning resource. This three-piece suite of flexible, streamlined and comprehensive training programmes are available on Moodle, building the knowledge and skills that are essential to becoming a first-class researcher. Courses in this series include:

1.	ETHICAL RESEARCH	Prepares researchers to face the ethical challenges of their research. It provides guidance on how to work ethically in different circumstances, encouraging researchers to reflect on their assumptions and behaviour.
2.	ENHANCING RESEARCH IMPACT	Helps researchers to articulate the value of their research beyond academia by providing the tools and training they need to embed impact into their research throughout all stages of their career.
3.	SUPERVISING DOCTORAL STUDIES	Offers comprehensive, flexible and engaging training in the core principles and practices of doctoral supervision to equip new and more experienced supervisors to support doctoral candidates’ development into independent Researchers.

HR for Research in collaboration with SETU CTEL developed a detailed communications document containing information pertaining to each specific module with accompanying links to Moodle. Embedded within this document is a support screencast that shows researchers how to, in a step-by-step way- access, self-enroll, logon to the modules in Moodle and commence learning. Participants can work through the various sections as a whole or dip in and out of modules based on their specific needs. Each module has a multiple-choice summary review, to enable participants to consolidate their learning and thinking. A unique SETU/EPIGEUM Certificate has also been devised for Moodle and is awarded to participants upon course completion. To date, 149 participants have engaged with the Ethical Research module, 15 new supervisors have availed of the Supervising Doctoral Candidates. The research impact module is currently under new development, SETU is participating in developing the new module in conjunction with other Universities across Ireland and the UK, stats re participation will be available once relaunched.

6.2 Recruitment

The Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) Policy for the Effective Recruitment and Selection of Funded Research Staff at SETU was introduced in 2020 to assist the organisation to better implement OTM-R practices. Structured around the key stages of the researcher employee life cycle from **Pre-recruitment** to **Recruitment**, and from: **Pre-Employment** to **Contract**.

The focus is to ensure that we always aims to recruit the best person for the position and that all our recruitment procedures are based on principles of equal opportunities for all candidates (both internal and external). This policy has been recently updated (May 2022) to align with the principals of SETU's wider Recruitment and Selection policy. In conjunction with SETU HR and SETU EDI Unit, hiring researchers continued to be trained in the areas of Interview license training, renewal, and Unconscious Bias Awareness Training, which fully align with the OTM-R policy.

An e-recruitment tool was introduced to facilitate the recruitment of staff by streamlining the application and selection procedures. The tool allows for a timely and efficient follow-up of the applications by HR Recruitment including Research Recruitment. Training was provided in spring 2022 by SETU HR for all research Hiring Managers and end users.

6.3 Dedicated Resources

SETU's HR Business Partner for Research leads the HRS4R strategy at the University. Working in collaboration with the senior management in both the office of Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies and the Human Resources Department to shape, guide and deliver an effective and consistent HR service for SETU's research community. With responsibility for aligning organisational and HR strategy with research careers and training and development opportunities to assist both researchers and management in SETU's diverse research institutes, units and centres.

SETU also has a dedicated Research Recruitment Officer to support the research community with all aspects of the Recruitment and Selection process including OTM-R. SETU Research vacancies are widely distributed and advertised on the University website, Euraxess.com, Irishjobs.ie and relevant domain-specific platforms to reach as many potential applicants as possible and encourage external and international applicants to apply in line with OTM-R principals of Open recruitment.



7. Working Conditions & Social Security

7.1 Recognition

Researchers make a significant contribution to the strategic ambitions of the University and this significant role is recognised in a range of ways:

- » The University is a signatory to the European Commission Charter and Code showing we are committed to creating an environment in which all researchers can thrive;
- » Continued Funding from the Office of the Vice President Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies to support HRS4R including a dedicated HR Business Partner for Research to manage HRS4R at SETU, a dedicated Research Recruitment Officer and through supporting researcher development via continued annual investment in the BYH programme.
- » The SETU Research Awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievement, impact and successes of our researchers. Awards are granted under the following categories: Early Career Researcher; Established Researcher; Research Impact and Research Supervisor Award.

7.2 Training

The Broaden Your Horizons Researcher Development (BYH) programme was developed in 2019. Its focus is the needs of Early Career Researchers (ECRs): from R1's | Postgraduate Students to R4's | Senior Postdoctoral Researchers/PI's. The BYH programme provides an advanced level of research skills, personal and professional development to develop SETU's researchers in line with the University's commitment to the European "Charter and Code". The programme has as the heart of its ambition to further the principal themes of SETU's (Waterford) Research Strategy by providing our researchers with a comprehensive development programme, providing them with the specialist knowledge and transferable skills required to succeed in their research roles, whilst encouraging the independence and agency required to transit to a future role, whether within Higher Education or beyond.

8. The BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS RDP | A Year In Review

The programme ran from September 2021-June 2022 and delivered over 30 bespoke events specifically for researchers. 2021-2022 saw the achievement of several key milestones in delivering SETU's approach to HRS4R and researcher development via the BYH programme, which in its current form, focuses on the provision of core transferable skills and behavioural development. Specialist and technical skills suitable for researchers working in specific disciplines fall within the domain of the programme but are delivered centrally by the Research Support Unit or at local level within the School or Research centre. The content of the programme is also guided by the domains and sub-domains of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and the IUA Research Career Development Framework, researchers are supported with development activity in each area. The programme is commissioned each academic year, with courses delivered by internal and external facilitators, funded by the Office of the Vice President Research Innovation and Graduate Studies. Day-to-day operations are overseen by the HR Business Partner for Research. Outlined below are some BYH offerings delivered during the last academic year:

8.1 SETU's Women In Research Network (WIRN)

SETU's Women In Research Network (WIRN) launched on International Women's Day 2022. This forum for research-active women provides female and female identifying staff the opportunity to connect and collaborate to help us build a more equitable and inclusive research culture at SETU. The network encourages women in research to come together to share experiences and opportunities, access resources and network with colleagues.

Membership of WIRN is open to female and female-identifying academics and researchers at all levels, and professional and technical staff working in research. WIRN will host regular networking lunches, hold events on topical issues for women in research, and advocate for women in research through various University Committees. The WIRN received internal funding from SETU's EDI enhancement fund in 2022. This network will be grown in the 2022-2023 academic year with a "Visioning workshop" taking place in early autumn; to date 71 women from SETU have joined the network.

8.2 PODCAST 9+

PODCAST 9+ launched in Autumn 2021, this new podcast series 9+ hosted by lecturer and Podcast enthusiast Robert O'Connor, from the Department of Computing & Mathematics who turned his curious mind to the world of research. Each episode a researcher joined Rob to explore the latest research and research related topics that affect all of us! In its first year, we have produced episodes on physical activity, spirituality, additive manufacturing, agricultural robotics, mental health, entrepreneurship, and researcher careers.

8.3 Research Brown Bag Series

Research Brown Bag Series returned for a second year. Brown Bag seminars included presentations of outstanding research from across SETU (Waterford) and SETU (Carlow) with talks from Walton Institute, SocialCORE, NRCI, OTR and Dept. of Aerospace, Mechanical & Electronic Engineering. Seminars also featured national and international experts from Harvard Medical School, Imperial College London, CropX, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL), Focus Games Scotland, The University of Nottingham, and VID Specialized University, Norway. Seminars were held the first Thursday of each month from 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM, hosted online via Zoom, 15 speakers presented during the last series.

8.4 The Odyssey Researcher Mentoring Programme Reflection

Now in its third year, this initiative enables early career researchers (Mentees) to receive encouragement, support, guidance, specific skills and knowledge from more experienced researchers (Mentors) to enhance the Mentees career and personal growth during their research journey. We aimed to cultivate a supportive researcher-mentoring network through which Mentees can learn by example, receive encouragement, support and advice and access the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to advance their careers and achieve their career aspirations and potential. The ODYSSEY places a strong emphasis on the development of research skills including communication and networking, building a strong set of publications and contributing to grant applications. It also helps identify what career pathways might be possible, skills such as learning how to strengthen your C.V, expand your connections are explored.

8.4.1 Impact

The impacts of schemes such as the ODYSSEY are likely to be more keenly felt in the medium to longer term. We anticipate increased impact when the SETU research culture is more defined and expect the initiative to provide SETU with a healthy pipeline of female researchers, and gender balance amongst those in senior research positions in our new university. To date, 56 mentor-mentee pairs have participated in the programme. Of 28 Mentors, 8 were women and 20 were men, and of the 28 Mentees, 21 were women and 7 were men. Mentor-mentee pairs are matched based on their application information provided such as their research areas, goals for participation, early-career researcher/mid-career status and experience. An independent matching panel taking into account gender balance conducts the matching process.

8.4.2 Benefits

The benefits of the ODYSSEY go far beyond the benefits to the research system at SETU, in the first instance, the existence of the scheme has legitimised research and research careers in a sector where research is not reflected in faculty contracts. More particularly, reflecting on their experiences keywords Mentees associate with the ODYSSEY include **fulfilment, opportunity, support, solidarity, networking, inspiration, role models, guidance, clarity and integration**. Social and psychological impacts, especially for female researchers, such as increased self-confidence and self-awareness; leadership and communication skills; better listening skills; exposure to new and different perspectives; growing a personal network; increased job satisfaction; paying it forward, being advocated for, feeling more empowered, feeling less alone and less isolated and breaking down silos have all been identified as benefits by some Mentees. The ODYSSEY has helped Mentees better understand the challenges of research careers (and especially the challenges within our sector) and as a result has helped in some way with becoming more resilient to negative feedback.

The initiative has helped new researchers become more established, raise their profile and develop networks. It is anticipated that many mentees will become mentors and therefore we plan that the population of female mentors will increase over time. Benefits identified by Mentors include:

- » Help develop the potential of others
- » Improved relationships with colleagues
- » Enhanced interpersonal and people management skills
- » Personal satisfaction
- » New perspectives
- » Improved listening, mentoring and support skills
- » Better understanding of Researchers needs, particularly Early Career Researchers and issues affecting departments outside own research area
- » Opportunity to attend dedicated Mentoring training
- » Opportunity to “give back” and “make a difference”.

Positive outcomes of the ODYSSEY are not restricted to the participants. A large part of the value of The ODYSSEY is in the benefits to the organisation as a whole through enriching our research environment. It has had a positive impact on the organisational culture helping us to achieve our HRS4R ambition in becoming a more inclusive, integrated and diverse research culture that will be carried into the SETU. Reflecting on the pilot programme, each year a higher proportion of men signed up as Mentors, whilst more women signed up as Mentees.

Going forward we aim to challenge this and cultivate a more supportive network through which women researchers can receive greater access, encouragement, support, advice to the necessary knowledge, skills and resources via dedicated leadership CPD programmes to advance their careers and achieve their full potential as Research Mentors.

8.5 Researcher Orientation

This central programme is organised through HR for Research. It aims to introduce new researchers to the relevant SETU services and benefits, which can support them as staff, and researchers. It also highlights key institutional and national drivers that promote research performance, opportunities on the BYH programme, support career development, and network with other researchers at SETU.

8.6 Postgraduate Induction

This induction is hosted twice a year by the Graduate Studies Office to introduce SETU's research regulations, research finance opportunities, and information/library resources. The induction also provides an overview of the processes relevant to research postgraduates about ethics requirements, health and safety issues, data protection, as well as the various supports available to students including HRS4R and BYH opportunities.

8.7 Managing Upwards

This workshop helps researchers develop the skill of managing up and understand how to actively build strong, meaningful professional relationships. Topics explored included: Understanding different personality styles and how to deal with them; How to communicate with different styles; Understanding your PI's priorities; Being strategic e.g. choosing research areas; Asking rather than waiting; How to actively wait; Asking for feedback; Interpreting feedback when you get it; Meetings – agenda and notes; Delivering on your commitments – following through; Saying No and negotiating as well as dealing with Disagreements.

8.8 Turbocharge Your Writing

This interactive workshop offers tips on how to become a prolific academic writer. Researchers learn more about academic writing and how to turbocharge their own unique style.

8.9 Open, Transparent and Merit Based Recruitment (OTM-R)

This OTM-R training workshop was opened up for anyone involved in the recruitment and selection process of funded research staff. Taking researcher through SETU's OTM-R policy via a step-by-step guide of the Researcher recruitment process, including Pre-Recruitment, Recruitment, Appointment and Contracting.

8.10 Communicate with Impact

In this workshop researchers discover how to 'connect the dots' between effective communications, successful funding applications, societal impact, and career progress. Learning impactful communication tools and techniques used in academia, business, and the dramatic arts. Practice communicating vividly about research and its purpose using storytelling and shared experiences without confusing jargon to connect with all types of audiences.

8.11 Public Engagement

We aimed this workshop at researchers who are new to public engagement and experienced researchers looking for a new perspective, full of tips, tricks and strategies for making the most of engagement. Researchers explored how to create the perfect public engagement tailored to their subject, how to create a lasting impression by enthusing audiences, giving engaging presentations and working with communities with renewed confidence.

8.12 Progressing Your Research in Challenging Times

This workshop is for researchers who have faced difficulty in their work. We looked at the two core models of stakeholder engagement and innovation under constraint to help participants explore how they can maintain momentum in their research during challenging times. The final section of the course acknowledges that these are exceptional times (Covid 19 Pandemic 21-22) and while some may find opportunity, others may struggle, and offers some tools and techniques for dealing with periods of uncertainty.

8.13 The ODYSSEY-Virtual Workshop

Compulsory for new Mentors and Mentees on the ODYSSEY to attend a virtual introductory workshop and information briefing. Through guided practice and reflection, the workshop helps participants build skills that are useful in cultivating and managing successful mentoring relationships. During the workshop, Mentees and Mentors have an opportunity to refine their objectives for the programme, gain an understanding of the types of outcomes that are common and hear each other's perspectives. The session also explains the programme timescales, expected commitment time, confidentiality, evaluation processes, and further mentoring resources that Mentees and Mentors can expect.

8.14 EPIGEUM Development Group Research Impact: Creating Meaning and Value

SETU has collaborated with Epigeum to peer-review the Research Impact course, gaining a license to the modules in perpetuity. By joining the development group, we are working alongside fellow experts and the best in our sphere internationally – creating extensive networking opportunities and career-enhancing experiences.

8.15 52 Ways to Stay Well During Your Research Career

There are many things in research that are out of our control, e.g. the funding model, the review process, limited positions. This workshop looked at some of the things that might be within our control, exploring a selection of strategies that people across the world have used to stay well during their research careers. There are, of course, many others, this course just focused on 52, one for each week of the year. (73 researchers attended this session highlighting a need to focus on researcher wellness).

9. Researcher Wellbeing

Researcher wellbeing and Researcher wellness continues to be a main priority for SETU. We have a range of wellbeing initiatives to help researchers cope with the highs and lows that everyone experiences doing research. Our wellbeing initiatives are based around Being Connected, Being Active, Being Present, Being Engaged and Being Kind. We actively encourage researchers to take time out at regular wellbeing events including **Researcher Wellbeing Walks** on the local Waterford Greenway, **Researcher Games Sports Days**, **Researcher Bake offs**, **Researcher Networking Coffee Mornings**, **Festive Get Togethers**, as well as **Spring and Summer Socials**.

We have a dedicated researcher wellbeing Twitter account [@Wellresearch_SETU](https://twitter.com/Wellresearch_SETU) promoting various aspects of researcher wellbeing and sign posting researchers to other useful wellbeing resources. At the time of writing this report, the annual researcher “Game of Research Rounders” was about to be held, the first in person research get together post Covid.

These regular informal social opportunities for researchers provide an opportunity to network and to share the many potential wellbeing pitfalls of research, swap coping strategies, share information and connect with the wider Researcher community. The COVID-19 pandemic has put undue strain on our mental health and overall well-being; as a result, some researchers find themselves even more stressed than usual, as they take on new challenges in their work and personal lives. With our MyWellBeing resources, we bring some new resources to help researchers with their own wellness journey.



10. Other HRS4R Activity

10.1 Horizon 2020 EU-CONEXUS Research for Society Project

We are a member of the EU Conexus Consortium on WP1 and WP3 contributing to the development of an “EU Conexus GEAP”; “MS15 Transversal skills training programme brochure”; and “A Study on the challenges of inter-campus EU-CONEXUS to implement actions required by HRS4R award” and has participated in various EU Conexus conferences throughout the 2021-2022 period, disseminating SETU’s HRS4R approach and key outputs.

10.2 EDI

We are a member of the Institutional Athena Swan SAT team and the SETU GEAP committee, contributing to the draft SETU Gender Equality Action Plan, GEAP Progress Report and the Horizon Europe GEP Mapping Process. We have participated in a number of celebratory EDI events including International Women’s Day March 2022 & International Men’s Day, November 2021. The Women in Research Network successfully secured internal funding from the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Fund in 2022 to help us to grow the network. We continue to work in close collaboration with SETU’s EDI Unit.

10.3 Joint EDI Collaboration

Joint EDI Collaboration between University of Nebraska-Lincoln (USA) and SETU, this network of academic and professional services colleagues are working collaboratively to share best practice to embed EDI across institutional policy and governance, research, and education, co-led by our HR Business Partner for Research and Associate Professor Sasitharan Balasubramaniam, UNL in conjunction with our VP for EDI.

10.4 HR Leadership & Management Awards 2022

SETU’s HRS4R “The ODYSSEY Researcher Mentoring” initiative and the “Broaden Your Horizons Researcher Development” programme have been shortlisted for the National HR Leadership & Management Awards 2022 under the Best Public Sector HR Initiative category and the Best Learning and Development Strategy category, awaiting outcome.

11. Connection & Collaboration

- » HR for Research at SETU “give back” by sharing our experience with Universities throughout Europe and beyond; Nationally-UCC; UCD, UL; TU Dublin and MTU. Internationally| Università Politecnica Delle Manche, Italy; KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden; Klaipeda University, Lithuania; University of Zadar, Croatia; Université de La Rochelle – IUT, France; UVC, Spain; University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA, Kings College London, South African Medical Research Council.
- » Awarded the People’s Choice Poster Award at the European Association for Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA) Digital Conference 2021. The poster showcased initiatives that SETU (Waterford) has introduced to support its researchers under the umbrella of HRS4R).
- » Two members of the HRS4R Operational Group have a number of years expertise as International HRS4R Expert Evaluators with the European Commission.

12. Communication

The following communication channels were employed during the year to disseminate HRS4R Updates:

1. The SETU Research Staff Hub, embedded within the RSU teams channel, provides researchers with a central resource including key documentation, information for new starters, training and development opportunities and links to the BYH brochure and past event recordings where applicable.
2. Research News and HR News monthly e-newsletters are used to communicate key HR4R related messages to researchers, including BYH training opportunities.
3. The BYH e-brochure is circulated to all staff at SETU via all staff email, this channel is also used to advertise all BYH opportunities at various points through-out the year.
4. HRS4R Website showcases our HR Excellence in Research journey. This site contains official Action Plan documents, letter of endorsement, OTM-R policy and checklist, and a useful postcard with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. It also holds details of all HRS4R events and training opportunities, in addition to interactive graphics and HRS4R specific video content. The aim of the site is to clearly break down the many channels of our HRS4R activities, which can be easily accessed both internally and externally.
5. Updates were provided by the Vice President Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies at the various Researcher Get Togethers throughout the year.
6. Presented SETU's HRS4R journey at various national and international conferences including participation at the EU Conexus Trilogy: European University for Everyone! Reflections on Diversity and Gender Equality in ENHANCE: #1 How to mainstream Diversity and Gender Equality? #2 How to empower underrepresented groups? #3 How to train staff and students about diversity and gender issues? ; ECORYS GEP annual conference in collaboration with Transform4Europe and RUN-EU alliances; CASPER Gender Equality Certification for European Proposals!

13. Looking Ahead 2022–2023 & Beyond

The plan for the forthcoming year is to continue to deliver the existing Action Plan, this will be carried out with the assistance of both the joint SETU Waterford and SETU Carlow HRS4R Operational Group and the HRS4R Monitoring Group, both groups will be re-established with new membership from across both entities in September 2022. There is a widespread recognition that scope exists for us to build-on the foundation created by our involvement in HRS4R. Discussions over the past year with the HRS4R Operational and Monitoring Groups (which includes representation from SETU's research community) have identified several areas where additional activity is required to deliver our Human Resource Strategy for Researchers:

1. A more comprehensive programme for Postdocs to be designed in consultation with Postdoctoral Researchers;
2. A more extensive provision of non-traditional approaches to learning and support, including exploring career coaching provision, industry secondments and the reigniting of SETU's Researcher Networks;
3. Developing teaching opportunities for researchers;
4. Leadership development for senior researchers, with a focus on Senior Postdocs and Principal Investigators;
5. Providing a wider range of learning events through BYH, with particular attention to the gender dimension of research, HR management training for research leaders;

6. Greater alignment with the new SETU Development Strategy (once developed) and retaining our HR Excellence in Research Award necessitates the creation of joint HRS4R Committees between SETU Waterford and SETU Carlow, integrating our Carlow colleagues into the HRS4R process, a SETU- wide approach to HRS4R and Action Plan delivery;
7. Developing stronger links with the CPD Co-ordinator, the centrally-provided CPD programmes, the Graduate Studies Office and the Careers Office, to ensure a more integrated and comprehensive approach to researcher development;
8. Providing greater support for participants on the ODYSSEY, focus on increasing the number of female Mentors and growing the Mentor pool to match demand from Mentees;
9. “Best of Both” training workshops to be developed to offer support for researcher managers on SETU’s hybrid work model, in conjunction with wider HR;
10. Continued alignment with SETU’s GEAP and Horizon Europe GEP;
11. Continue with the implementation of identified Action items in the Action Plan 2020-2023.

14. COVID19

Building a better research culture means overhauling the way we think about reward and recognition for researchers going forward, the Covid19 pandemic has only made this clearer. With lockdown affecting researchers in so many different ways, some of our researchers had limited access to labs whilst others were faced with juggling caring responsibilities and home-schooling, leaving our early-career researchers particularly vulnerable. International evidence increasingly highlights widespread concern that such extra pressures may have exacerbated the existing gender imbalance, leading to fewer outputs from female researchers. Research mobility has also been paused; researchers missed opportunities to take up their industry placements and or fellowships or secondments at other Universities.

Over the next year, we will look at what can be done to support our early career researchers in particular to try to minimise the impact of the pandemic on their future careers. The ODYSSEY Researcher Mentoring programme will have an even bigger role to play in this going forward. We will ensure to provide opportunities for researchers to articulate the impacts of the pandemic on their experience and work collectively to introduce key interventions to benefit them. A “Research Reinvigoration” survey will be shared with all members of SETU’s research community with the aim to identify the support they may need to reinvigorate their research post-COVID. It is envisaged the data gathered will help us better assess the impact on their research as a result of the pandemic, we want to assess researchers’ contributions more holistically, considering the impact of their research, but also the impact they make on the sector through activities like mentoring, good leadership and public engagement.

Covid-19 has also shown how crucial it is to transform the digital environment; Microsoft Teams continues to equip our researchers with the tools needed to collaborate remotely. During 2021-2022 we continued to adopt a hybrid work model for all researchers, blending remote and in-office working, to take advantage of the best of both environments, giving researchers who so wish the option of working remotely up to two days a week to let them find a rhythm and level of flexibility that suits themselves. The SETU pilot Hybrid working policy will remain in operation until December 2022, during this time we will link in the wider HR department to provide “Best of Both” training workshops to support employees as well as managers with this blended working model. We also maintained our hiring momentum during the past year to ensure ongoing research performance. 28 new research hires joined SETU (Waterford) in 2021-2022.

The pace of training also remained on track and even accelerated in the past year, we have equipped our researchers with online professional development since the outset of the crisis, adapting the content of our programme offerings to respond to remote working and virtual engagement, this has resulted in greater flexibility with researchers participating in shorter, bite-sized interactive online programmes. Although, this shift to online provision has had benefits related to how accessible, equitable, flexible our approaches to researcher development are, it will be important to review in light of new working patterns both the expectations on researchers and expectations from researchers with regard to what development approaches are appropriate and sought after by our researcher community.

15. Conclusion

While some gaps remain in our alignment to the Charter and Code principles, our Action plan is working steadily towards closing these gaps. We have successfully delivered on a number of our HRS4R Action items this past year and we very much look forward to working with our colleagues as we progress into the next phase of our HRS4R journey at SETU.

The deadline for submission of the next HRS4R internal review as a merged entity to the European Commission is April 2025. Continued support from SETU's Senior Leaders is essential to help us to continue to deliver on our HR4R action plan and to further embed real cultural change across the University. A special note of thanks to all members of the HR4R Operational Committee; HRS4R Monitoring Committee; Research Innovation and Graduate Studies, Human Resources, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit, and the Executive Board whom have contributed in so many invaluable ways to delivering our HRS4R ambitions at SETU to date.

On behalf of the HR Business Partner for Research, HRS4R Project Lead @SETU Waterford.

16. Further Information

For Further Details on HRS4R at SETU please contact Eimear Fitzpatrick, HR Business Partner for Research/SETU's HRS4R Project Lead Eimear.Fitzpatrick@setu.ie