

# SETU Human Resource Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

**Progress Report:  
September 2022– August 2023**

*October, 2023*



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



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TU**

Ollscoil  
Teicneolaíochta  
an Oirdheiscirt

South East  
Technological  
University

## Introduction

The South East Technological University (SETU), a multi campus institution, first achieved the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) award in 2014 under former entity Waterford Institute of Technology. Subsequent re-accreditation (2016; 2021) demonstrates our commitment to our research community and to improving their working environment through the implementation of our action plans, specifically the Human Resource Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) Action Plan (2020-23). Researchers are at the heart of our Research and Innovation Strategic Objectives within the University's Strategic Plan "**Connecting for Impact**" (2023-28).

The past year has been a time of extraordinary change for colleagues at SETU, this period saw a significant transformation in the way we work together with a greater focus on collaboration. We are now at the stage of re-imagining HRS4R as a merged organisation, implementing and embedding new people-centric approaches into our ways of working which will be reflected in our next HRS4R Action Plan (2024-2027).

## Research Culture

Researchers come to SETU from all over the world to enjoy and contribute to a stimulating research environment. Beyond resources and facilities, an environment that enables the highest quality research must also be sustained by a positive working culture. We acknowledge that the research culture in SETU is not perfect. Some of the challenges we face are specific to our own institution, and many are complex, systemic issues found in research communities across the world. As a signatory of the **Charter and Code** and as a recipient of the HREiR award, we have already made a commitment to creating a research culture that is supportive, inclusive, and equitable.

Our **HRS4R Action Plan** set out our ambitions for research culture at the institution, which we have been steadily working towards since over a decade. Incorporating our proposed actions for meeting our Charter and Code obligations, whilst connecting them with several other agendas relating to research culture, creating a comprehensive approach to drive change right across the institution. Since 2014, we have been ambitious in trying new initiatives and activities that have undoubtedly helped us to drive change.

The plan is a constantly evolving document which is co-owned and co-delivered by the research community at SETU in conjunction with a number of key support staff. It specifically looks at how best to support researchers at all career stages (R1-R4). We have invested in supporting our researchers through a comprehensive professional development programme, access to networks, mentoring programmes, along with dedicated wellbeing supports.

SETU's HRS4R agenda is driven by our HR Business Partner for Research with wider support from the Office of Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies, Human Resources, the Graduate Studies Office and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion unit at SETU, who work collaboratively with our colleagues across the research community to deliver on key actions and tackle challenges together.



## Key Achievements & Progress

The 2020-2023 Action Plan which we are currently implementing includes a number of ambitious targets, against which progress has been made as detailed in this report. We would like to take the opportunity to highlight key progress this past year and share additional noteworthy achievements, which were not envisaged when the Action Plan was prepared in 2020:

### *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion*

#### *Gender Equality Action Plan & Horizon Europe*

In 2022, a comprehensive review and mapping exercise was carried out by the VP for EDI in conjunction with the HR Business Partner for Research and an expert panel. This review ensures the University could evidence full compliance with all of the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan requirements and recommendations (SETU Horizon Europe GEP Mapping, Dec 2022). The President published a signed declaration confirming that existing SETU Waterford gender equality strategies and plans meet the eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe (Horizon Europe SETU Signed Declaration on Gender Action Plan).

#### *Athena Swan*

The University is currently preparing an Athena Swan Bronze Award application for submission in 2024. We will continue to foster the supportive relationships that have been forged across EDI, Research and HR, ensuring research colleagues with a range of diverse backgrounds, perspectives and experiences are represented. Inclusion is a core value of HRS4R at SETU. Through HRS4R we have actively grown our network of people, programmes, initiatives, and tools to help researchers grow and manage their careers and help managers and leaders to build more inclusive research environments. Fostering both a top-down and grassroots approach, has given us the freedom to address the broadest set of gender initiatives relevant to our research community.

#### *Aurora Women in Leadership Programme*

In support of the University's Athena SWAN agenda and ongoing commitment to promoting and valuing leadership development and career progression for women across the University, the EDI Unit funded a number of places on the 2022/23 Aurora Programme, including a Postdoctoral Researcher and a member of PMSS staff supporting research.

#### *Women In Research Network (WIRn)*

The WIRn inaugural "Visioning Workshop" took place in November, bringing together women in research from across the University. The WIRn aims to appeal to researchers of all levels, and to raise the profile and visibility of female and female identifying researchers at SETU. The workshop explored the accomplishments, challenges, quality of work experiences, insights and recommendations to build a more equitable and inclusive research community for women in research across SETU. Keynote speakers shared triumphs and adversity, and profound reflections of their personal experiences as women navigating their research and wider careers.

#### *Inclusion Of The Gender Dimension In Research*

The Research Support Unit have generated a wealth of information and gender specific resources stored on the Staff Hub. A section providing detailed guidance on how to incorporate gender considerations into research grants is contained in the cross-cutting resources handbook, in addition to dedicated training sessions.

## *Ethical & Professional Aspects*

### *Research Integrity*

Our culture of research integrity is underpinned by our Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research, our subscription to the Epigeum Research Integrity programme as well as the principles of the Charter and Code to support Research Integrity with clear and accessible policies, procedures, and guidance. Led by our Research Integrity Officer in conjunction with the RSU, throughout the period 2022-2023, researchers had access to regular research integrity and ethics training. Robust internal review processes were implemented in addition to regular training, workshops and audits to ensure compliance.

### *Epigeum Research Skills Toolkit*

To complement the 'in person' opportunities for development available through the Broaden Your Horizons programme, once again the research community had full access to the EPIGEUM Research Skills Toolkit online learning resource. This flexible, streamlined, and comprehensive training programme was made available on V.L.E, building the knowledge and skills that are essential to becoming a first-class researcher. Courses in this series included **Ethical Research** and **Supervising Doctoral Studies**.

### *Continued Commitment To Open Research*

The RSU continues to advance SETU's commitment to Open Research by working closely with internal services and stakeholders supporting open research, organising dedicated trainings. Research at SETU is managed in adherence to internal and external policies and legal obligations, this research support environment enables researchers to conduct research at the highest international levels of excellence.

### *Dora*

The University is a signatory of DORA (The declaration on research assessment). We continue to explore the way in which research and researchers are assessed outside of the traditional narrow range of metrics that are typically used to indicate success, usually related to research outputs.

### *The Research Excellence Awards*

The **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARDS** led by the Research Support Unit is one mechanism introduced to **Recognise, Reward and Value** our researchers and their contributions, helping to capture and reward positive behaviours that support a healthy research culture. Categories of award include Early Career Researcher Award; Established Researcher Award; Research Impact Award and Research Supervision award.



## **Recruitment & Selection**

### **Recruitment & Retention Of Researchers**

During the period 2022-2023 we continued to adopt and implement SETU's Open and Transparent Merit Based Recruitment (OTM-R) practices. 100% of recruitment panel members hold an Interview licence to ensure that fair and inclusive selection methods are used throughout the recruitment process. Whilst our roots are in the South East, our reach is global. All research positions were advertised on the EURAXESS portal, giving us greater access to a much wider, more diverse pool of international talent, whilst ensuring our research recruitment campaigns are open and transparent.

A diverse range of research opportunities were advertised this past year, ranging from VP of Research, Heads of Division, TTO; Project Managers, Administrators, Postdocs, Research Engineers, Research Assistants and Research Leads. We are an inclusive, international research community and fully appreciate the benefits of diversity within our community and the enormous benefits this brings.

### **Unconscious Bias Awareness Training**

All Interview panel members must undertake UBA training, ensuring that all members identify unconscious bias and its potential impact on behaviour and decision-making, exploring ways of mitigating and challenging unconscious bias.

## **Working Conditions & Social Security**

### **Pension**

Since 2008 we have lobbied the HEA and National Government seeking equality regarding access to the public service pension for research staff in the Technological University sector. We have contributed to several reviews over the past number of years. A business case has been submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan and Reform (2022) and continues to be under review.

### **Hybrid Working**

Hybrid Working is an important element of the University's strategy for embedding new and innovative ways of working to support a positive work-life balance for staff. Post pandemic feedback collated indicated that many of our researchers who had moved to remote working out of necessity would like to retain some element of remote working. Hybrid Working arrangements have helped us to attract and retain talented researchers, support employee engagement and wellbeing and is helping us achieve our aims around inclusion and environmental sustainability. During the past year hybrid working continued to be available to those roles that have been identified as having the potential to be a 'hybrid' worker as described by the University's Hybrid Working policy.

Researcher Rounders  
Event 2022



Research Colleagues from FZU visit  
SETU 2023



## *Training & Development*

Delivery of a comprehensive professional development programme for Researchers through the Broaden Your Horizons Researcher Development Programme (BYH), includes asynchronous online delivery of training and support materials, and synchronous delivery of group training sessions. The BYH programme offers an extensive programme of professional skills and career development training, support, and opportunities, which enable members of SETU's research community to succeed in their current position while planning their next steps. The 2022-2023 academic year enabled us to continue providing an already established programme, as well as develop and launch new resources, projects and courses. Highlighted below are both new and continuing activities that were delivered in 2022-2023 in terms of supporting researchers personal and professional development.

### *Welcome Inductions*

To help postdocs and postgraduate students integrate into their new role, the RSU and the GSO invited all new research community members to an Orientation/Postgraduate welcome induction. Participants learned about the supports and opportunities available to them at SETU and had an opportunity to meet other recent joiners at the University.

### *PODCAST 9Plus*

SETU's 9plus podcast is a series that looks at the research community in SETU. Episodes focus on individual researchers, projects and funding opportunities. The series spans multiple disciplines and aims to be as inclusive as possible. In Season 2, lecturer Robert O'Connor, from the Department of Computing & Mathematics explored the latest research and research related topics brining us over 11 unique episodes with 22 Guest speakers. Topics ranged from Cell Biology to Music Industry Ethics and everything in between.

### *Research Brown Bag Series*

The Research Brown Bag series returned for a third year, highlighting some of the brilliant research undertaken at the University. Kicking off the series last Autumn, researchers from the National Centre for Men's Health Ireland presented their work on "Working Towards Gender Transformative Approaches to Engaging Men in Health Programmes". Before Christmas we heard from Dr Niamh McCreagh "All Things Considered, Should Egalitarian Movements Accept Philanthropic Funding?" whilst Francis Gahan shared her research on "Masculinity and Gender Equality in Caring Professions". On International Women's Day (March 8th) Dr Lisa Moran marked the occasion with us by presenting her research on "Negotiating Emotional Boundaries, and Emotional Suppression: Findings from a BNIM study of veterinarians' relationships with human and non-human clients in Ireland and the UK".



**SETU RESEARCH BROWN BAG SERIES**  
Celebrating International Women's Day 2023

8 March, 1 – 2pm

Negotiating Emotional Boundaries, and Emotional Suppression: Findings from a BNIM study of veterinarians' relationships with human and non-human clients in Ireland and the UK

Join us: <https://wit-ie.zoom.us/j/95707931668>



**Dr Lisa Moran**  
HOD & Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Care and Early Childhood at SETU in Waterford

## *Planning Your Research Career*

This workshop gave researchers the thinking time and tools to put together a realistic, achievable plan for their research career over the next 3-5 years, working backwards to where researchers were currently at in their career, helping them to set goals for shorter-term achievements.

## *Careers Series*

The GSO developed a series of alumni talks for PG research students with a cross-section of former students taking in different modes of study, level of award attained, and subsequent career destination. The ultimate aim being to foster a network of alumni who can contribute to career development.

## *Online Engagement*

As many traditional impact activities such as workshops, policy clinics, knowledge exchange and dissemination events have moved online and remain online, this workshop gave researchers the chance to explore a range of tools, learn how to manage meaningful online discussions and consider how to evaluate the impact of the activities.

## *Active Networking*

Researchers learned a systematic approach to networking and making connections in a range of relevant settings whether in person or online. We looked at conferences, first impressions, how to manage small talk as well as practical tips on introductions, how to start and finish conversations and arrange follow ups. Researchers had the opportunity to learn tactics to build useful, reciprocal relationships, maintain contacts, increase their network and set personal networking goals.

## *Building Research Leaders*

Explored the skills, knowledge and attributes that tend to be associated with research leaders, including interpersonal skills, leadership skills, thinking strategically, self-management and the ability to promote oneself. Designed to help emerging research leaders to develop these skills through: looking back; looking at the here and now; looking forward; being strategic; ensuring publication productivity; managing competing demands; making research a priority; avoiding becoming overwhelmed-saying NO; maintaining a balance between teaching, research and life and self-promotion.

## *Creating The 7 Secrets Of A Highly Successful Research Student (For Supervisors)*

This workshop gave supervisors practical strategies to deal with common problems such as: supervisor/student relations; dealing with writer's block; attitude (or lack thereof!) in relation to the PhD; getting a student to seek help when they are stuck ; the student who never has enough time; treating the PhD like a job; keeping on going when the going gets tough and planning the viva.

## *Promoting Yourself And Your Research*

Designed to help researchers to promote themselves and their research exploring strategies for: Developing a communication strategy; Pitching your message to your audience; How to make it accessible without dumbing down; Dealing with media and using new media; Developing your one minute pitch; Asking for what you want; Using convincing language; Self promotion; Networking, mentoring and collaborating; Putting yourself in the spotlight; Dealing with the discomfort of it all.

In addition to the Broaden Your Horizons programme the Research Support Unit hosted a series of workshops and seminars covering a range of themes. Topics included research integrity, open research/digital skills, open access, data management, management of funded projects; postdoc fellowship writing; grant writing; cross cutting themes: gender, open science, data analysis, commercialisation and IPR and engaged research for societal impact, all aimed at empowering researchers to conduct research to the highest standard.

## Wellbeing

The wellbeing of our research community is of fundamental importance. Through our work with HRS4R we have made real strides in the provision of support, training and resources to support wellbeing and we will continue our focus in this area with our next Action Plan. One of the aims of HRS4R at SETU is determining how we can promote a research culture that facilitates excellence in research whilst enabling researchers to flourish. While its focus is not just on researcher wellbeing specifically, much of the work in HRS4R touches upon factors critical to researcher well-being, such as career paths, recognition and reward, diversity/inclusion, and support for collaboration. Developing a sense of academic identity, career progression, as well as personal and professional development are all key parts of a successful research career and wellbeing. Throughout this academic year, we continued to bring new resources to help our research community members with their own wellness journey via our researcher wellbeing twitter account [@Wellresearch\\_SETU](#). We also ran a number of wellbeing workshops and initiatives, which are outlined below:

### *Staying Well In Your Research Career*

Workshop topics explored Managing the workload; Resilience and finding a balance; Learning how to switch off; Dealing with worries about setbacks and progress; Good habits e.g. exercise, sleep, routines; Dealing with isolation, lack of structure and loss of motivation, Procrastination, perfectionism and over-committing; Disagreements with supervisors. Pl's and other colleagues; Support for more serious mental health issues; Supporting friends/colleagues who may be struggling.

### *The Odyssey Research Mentoring Initiative*

Now in its fourth year **The ODYSSEY** has been guiding researchers with their own career development, developing competencies and problem solving skills whilst providing a more neutral support space outside of traditional managerial/supervisory relationships. The ODYSSEY also actively builds a sense of community amongst Mentors and Mentees and within wider ODYSSEY networks.

### *Coming Together Series*

During the past year, we introduced the **Coming Together** series, with the intention of creating a cohesive research community across SETU. We have worked on building relationships based on mutual trust, committing to keeping researchers informed and engaged in every step of HRS4R. Researchers from across SETU regularly participate in cultural, artistic, sporting and social event. In September, researchers came together at the community Research Rounders event, our first in person event post the pandemic and our very first event as a single Institution.

In October we marked the annual "**Samhana**" festival inviting researchers to attend the "**Spraoi Wicked Woods**" walk on the Greenway. In December we organised "**Carols at- Christmas**", a carol singing service with members of SETU's research community to raise vital funds for the Meningitis Research Foundation **Meningitis and septicaemia | Meningitis Research Foundation**. In February, we participated in SETU's Professional Development week offering a number of PD research related courses. In April, we celebrated National Employee Wellbeing Day with a countryside walk on the Greenway. These events are designed to help researchers to meet new colleagues, expand their network and hear others views and experiences of research life across the university in a relaxed social setting.

SETU also has a provision of dedicated mental health support services through the Employee Assistance Programme and the Department of Student Life and Learning available to all members of our research community. The Broaden Your Horizons Researcher Development Programme actively promotes awareness of these services amongst the community, as well as fostering an atmosphere that encourages those who need these services to use them through continuous promotion.

## External Activity

### *Research Culture Perspectives from Ireland and Abroad*

In early Autumn SETU participated in Ireland's first ever research culture conference at the Royal Irish Academy. The conference brought together members of the research community in Ireland, including researchers, research administrators, funders, and policy makers, for a meaningful conversation about the culture of research. SETU shared our perspectives on research culture and our approach, emphasizing that everyone within the community has a role to play in changing it.

### *Enhancing Strategic Partnerships*

This past year we have continued to forge international alliances with relevant and mutually beneficial expertise, to improve our own provision and the profile of SETU internationally. We welcomed colleagues from La Rochelle Université; Universidad de Católica de Valencí (UCV) and the Institute of Physics of the Czech Academy (FZU). This type of exchange helps us to achieve our HRS4R vision of being a more outward-facing community whilst developing new collaborations, benefiting from different perspectives and staying connected to a diverse range of communities across Europe.

### *Gender Equality*

In May 2023, we partnered with Maynooth University and five other national HEI's in a proposal entitled "Promote: Developing, Promoting and Implementing a Career Progression Training Platform & Network for Early Career Female Researchers-Academics (ECFRAs) across Irish HEIs", seeking funding under the **HEA's Gender Equality Enhancement Fund 2023** (awaiting outcome).

### *Horizon Europe WIDERIA Access European Excellence Initiative*

In July 2023, we learned of our success in the Horizon Europe WIDERIA Access European Excellence Initiative as a partner in the EU-CONEXUS ENABLES project "Promoting excellence through innovative eco-systems". SETU will lead on the **Research Careers** work package.

### *Vitae Impact, Culture and Engagement (ICE) Awards*

In August 2023, the work of our HR Business Partner for Research was included in the longlist on the Vitae website, in the Research culture impact through researcher development award category for her contribution to advancing researcher development across the HEI sector.

### *EDI*

We continue to work in close collaboration with the EDI department at SETU, contributing to the "EDI in our Research" component of the Strategic Plan. The joint International EDI Collaboration between University of Nebraska-Lincoln (USA) and ourselves continues to evolve, sharing elements of best practice to embed EDI across institutional policy and governance, research, and education.

## Governance

The University recently adopted a fully inclusive approach to both the governance and implementation of HRS4R through a revitalised structure. This structure ensures representation across the entire SETU research communities and emphasises the University's clear commitment to its obligations as a signatory to the Charter and Code. The implementation of HRS4R will be achieved via our **HRS4R Operational Group** through an ongoing operational planning process, our specific action plan and a programme of institutional initiatives. Progress will be overseen by the **HRS4R Monitoring Group** with regular updates reported to SETU's Executive Management team.

## Looking Ahead

In July 2023, the European Commission (EC) presented a tripartite initiative, **the European Framework for attracting and retaining talent in research, innovation and entrepreneurship in Europe**. The initiative outlines a new set of measures to tackle prevalent issues facing researchers such as precarious careers/salaries, difficulties regarding pension access, high mobility and general working conditions. The initiative includes a proposal for a Council Recommendation that establishes a new European framework for research careers including a **new Charter and Code for Researchers**, as well as the new **European Competence Framework for Researchers**, ResearchComp. The proposal has been put to member states, with a view to the Council adopting a final recommendation (awaiting outcome).

## Conclusion

Whilst we await an outcome on new EU developments regarding Researcher Careers, supporting our research community has always been and remains a top priority of HRS4R at SETU. Going forward, the success of HRS4R at SETU, more than ever before, will depend on our ability not only to create new ideas, build on our strengths and address head on, those areas that we need to improve upon, but to collaborate, plan and work together to achieve them with a collective sense of purpose and shared values.

We are very proud to be sector leading in terms of HRS4R in Higher Education in Ireland and a global collaborator of choice in the domain of researcher careers development. As the landscape for research and innovation continues to evolve and strengthen, our HR Strategy for Researchers will continue to shape and support it. In 2024, we will publish our HRS4R Action Plan together with the strategic delivery plans, detailing the combined and collective actions we will take to deliver our new HR strategy for Researchers at SETU. This will signal the start of an exciting new chapter for HRS4R at SETU, providing us with a three-year vision and unity of purpose to catalyse real transformational change for our research community, advancing our research culture for the better, **together**.

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 Management Team whom have contributed in so many invaluable ways to delivering our HRS4R ambitions at SETU to date.

One final note of thanks to our former Vice President for Research, Innovation and Impact Dr. Mark White. Thank you for your compassionate and tireless leadership; you have been a wonderful supporter of HRS4R from the outset. Your constant support and encouragement were central in helping us achieve so many of our HRS4R ambitions, including accessing and offering the necessary resources to allow our HRS4R vision grow into a vibrant part of the research culture here at SETU. We are richer in our ability to support our research community and their professional development as a result. Your genuine concern for researchers and your guiding hand helped so many through times of challenge, particularly during the pandemic and the last HRS4R external review. I wish you all the very best for your next endeavours.

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

**Eimear Fitzpatrick**

## 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](mailto:Eimear.Fitzpatrick@setu.ie)

