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| **Name of Institution** | Stranmillis University College, Belfast |
| **Reporting period** | 2023-2024 |
| **Date approved by governing body** | 6 November 2024 |
| **Date published online** | TBC |
| **Web address of annual report** | <https://www.stran.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Stranmillis-Annual-Report-2024-live-002.pdf> |
| **Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage** | <https://www.stran.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/> |
| **Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development** | Prof Noel Purdy OBE, Director of Research and Scholarship |
| **Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via** [**CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk**](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk) | TBC |

## Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Universities and Research Institutes

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| **Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers *(max 500 words)***  All academic staff at Stranmillis are engaged in research and scholarship. All are committed to reading research and to keeping abreast of the latest research publications in their respective academic areas to inform their teaching. All academic staff are also involved in supervising undergraduate research dissertations and an increasing number of staff supervise research dissertations at Master’s level. Several members of staff are currently involved in supervising doctoral research through Queen’s University, and several have been involved in doctoral examination across the UK and Ireland. The majority of our academic staff now hold doctoral qualifications or are working towards these, with funding provided as part of the College’s doctoral support policy. The vast majority of staff continue their research journey after their doctoral qualification and continue to research and publish in their chosen field of expertise.  The College’s research mission, reflected in the current Research and Scholarship Strategy is to contribute positively to society through undertaking innovative practitioner-focused research and scholarship at the highest international levels of excellence, and it aims to do so through its five key objectives:  • to engage in research and scholarship of the highest quality in terms of originality, significance and rigour;  • to develop the vitality and sustainability of the research and scholarship environment;  • to attract excellent staff and to develop and empower their careers;  • to ensure that our research has an impact on our teaching but also beyond academia yielding broader economic, social and cultural benefits;  • to extend our national and international reach by engaging in collaborative partnerships and disseminating our research and scholarship.  In order to facilitate these aims, the College has had a designated Research Office since 2009, and entered the RAE in 2008 and the REF in 2014 and 2021. Plans are already well underway to make a submission to the REF exercise in 2029. In REF2021 we were delighted when 78% of our research activity was judged to be of international standard (or above), with more than twice as many staff submitted compared to 2014.  Staff who engage in research and scholarship (teaching staff and research staff) are supported in a range of ways: including doctoral funding, support to present at conferences, a series of internal lunchtime research seminars and workshops, research mentorship and informal opportunities for less experienced staff to get involved in larger research projects. All of these acknowledge that all researchers require support, irrespective of the extent of their previous experience. | |
| **Provide a short summary of the institution’s strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success *(max 600 words)*** | |
| **Environment and culture**  Our strategic objectives, commensurate with the size and scale of research activity at Stranmillis, aim to develop awareness of the value and importance of engaging in research activity and in the range of supports available to staff. This includes the promotion of a series of lunchtime seminars and workshops to staff, the appointment of two visiting professors, the funding of part-time doctoral studies, the funding of staff to present at national/international conferences and the regular celebration of research achievements/publications by staff.  **Employment**  All permanent lecturing staff are contractually obligated to engage in research and scholarship. Those with significant responsibility for research (SRR) have an additional allowance of time in their workload.  We use part-time research registers to employ part-time temporary researchers for individual projects.  Our small number of full-time research staff (n=2) are encouraged and supported to engage in all relevant professional development opportunities through the College staff development procedures.  **Professional Development of Researchers**  Due to the small scale of research activity compared to larger HEIs, we are not currently able to offer sabbatical leave, however we are committed to exploring how best to provide career development for full-time research staff, commensurate with the size and scale of our institution.  All research staff are able to apply for professional development opportunities through the College staff development procedures. | |
| **Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/PIs); Researchers]** | |
| **Environment and**  **Culture *(max 600 words)*** | Institution/Academic Managers of Researchers/ Researchers  The 2023-24 academic year saw a very successful, well attended series of lunchtime seminars and research workshops offering internal opportunities for staff to present their research and also engage in workshops on, for instance, research ethics. These events were attended by a range of senior and middle management and researchers/lecturing staff. All staff are invited to attend such events.  In 2023-24 the College also funded 5 academic staff to engage in part-time doctoral study. We were delighted when 2 successfully completed their doctorates and graduated from UU and Cardiff Universities.  We funded a growing number of staff to travel and present at national and international conferences in a range of countries including Northern Ireland, Ireland, England, Greece, Denmark and Portugal.  In 2023 Stranmillis hosted the annual conference of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI), the first time the conference has come to Northern Ireland in 25 years. |
| **Employment *(max 600 words)*** | Institution/Academic Managers of Researchers/ Researchers  In 2023-24 we extended the contracts of two grade 7 research fellows through to end July 2024, following their temporary employment on a large RoI funded project.  We also refreshed our grade 4 and grade 7 research registers, from which we employ a range of research assistants/fellows on short funded projects. The research projects for which we receive funding are almost always short-term (3 -9 months) and often with very limited budgets (£10-30k). We are however always considering whether we can provide more long-term employment opportunities for research staff. In terms of lecturing staff, all new appointments to the College continue to require a contribution to research and scholarship.  The principal and senior leadership of the College remain fully committed to the development of research and scholarship opportunities for staff, as evidenced in the College’s annual business plans and annual reports. |
| **Professional development *(max 600 words)*** | Institution/Academic Managers of Researchers/ Researchers  All staff engaged in research and scholarship are able to make applications for staff development. As noted above, we have funded 5 members of lecturing staff to complete part-time doctoral studies in 2023-24. We have also advertised and recruited a cohort to begin part-time doctoral studies at Stranmillis on the new Doctorate in Educational Professional Practice (DProf) – this cohort includes two members of Stranmillis staff.  The size and scale of Stranmillis currently makes long-term sabbatical leave very challenging, however this is something which senior leaders at the College continue to reflect upon going forward.  We did offer a research writing retreat in 2023-24 but there was limited interest and so we were unable to run it.  We have secured internal funding to permit a growing number of staff to travel to present their research at a range of national and international conferences in 2023-24. |
| **Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result. *(max 500 words)*** | |
| This has been a successful academic year in terms of supporting research active staff right across the College.  As a small HEI with limited resources, we must always reflect on the opportunities for growth in terms of what we can offer as an institution but also consider how we can collaborate more closely with other neighbouring HEIs.  The major challenge remains how to support the growth of research and scholarship activity across the College with limited resource.  We may consider offering the writing retreat (funding dependent) at a different time of the year. | |
| **Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period**  ***(max 500 words)*** | |
| Key objectives:   * Meet with DfE to seek additional funding to support the growth of research and scholarship across Stranmillis University College * Explore opportunities for developing research special interest groups, with advice and support from our two visiting professors * Re-launch research mentorship programme across the College * Continue to seek opportunities for career development of researchers at all levels in the College. | |
| **Please provide a brief statement describing your institution’s approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body *(max 200 words)***  This annual statement is drafted by the Director of Research and Scholarship, and approved by the Research and Scholarship Committee, Education Committee of the Governing Body and ratified by the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College. | |

Signature on behalf of governing body: *Mr Edgar Jardine (Chair of Governing Body) – approved by members of the Education Committee at their meeting on 6 Nov 2024*

Contact for queries: Prof Noel Purdy OBE Email: [n.purdy@stran.ac.uk](mailto:n.purdy@stran.ac.uk)

This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at [CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

[www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk)