The Sheffield Leader

Leadership is critical to the ongoing success of the University of Sheffield and we aspire for it to be visible, capable and effective at all levels. While Sheffield Leaders are often recognised as those in formal roles leading a unit (faculty/department/research group/team), leadership is about making a contribution towards realising the University’s vision, which everyone is capable of doing if they choose to. Therefore Sheffield Leaders are not only defined by their position or authority, but also by their behaviours and influence. They emerge as they identify opportunities for improvement and act upon them, without waiting for assignment. This distinguishes our aspiration for leadership at the University of Sheffield as a collective endeavour of shared responsibilities within a collaborative leadership community.

For those in formal roles, being a Sheffield Leader means guiding their unit to replicate its successful workings, while making incremental and process improvements. In addition, all Sheffield Leaders are aware of the context in which their unit sits, and demonstrate the insight, anticipation, vision, agility and confidence to respond to the changing environment and make step changes when they are needed.

No matter what their position, being a Sheffield Leader means mobilising the energy of colleagues by connecting people, ideas and situations and creating space for them to evolve. Sheffield Leadership is about convening and facilitating conversations to engage people, in order to address issues, find solutions and deliver results. In keeping with the University’s culture of autonomy of thought and debate, Sheffield Leadership gives legitimacy to emerging and exploratory activities and fosters bottom-up ideas. Sheffield Leadership is also outward looking; those who demonstrate it think beyond their own unit, appreciating the shared endeavours of the University, higher education and the region, and exploit opportunities to collaborate and share in the pursuit of mutual benefits.

As well as being a leader in their academic discipline or their professional service area, the Sheffield Leader makes a wide contribution to the University:

- Sheffield Leaders represent and give identity to their unit; they communicate its function, take responsibility for its external reputation and are proud of its contribution. They are accountable for their decisions and accept responsibility for their own and their unit’s actions.

- The Sheffield Leader thinks systemically. They have an understanding of the strategic issues facing the University and higher education, and are equipped and prepared with a range of responses. Sheffield Leaders make sense of the environment and translate that into aims and aspirations. They are adaptable and flexible, yet have clarity of vision, make evidence-based decisions and are decisive in the face of uncertainty. They set direction, engage commitment, influence and demonstrate adaptability to complexity.

- Sheffield Leaders display strong communication skills and are able to inspire and motivate others. They connect people to the organisational purpose and vision, and are conduits for both horizontal and vertical communications. They provide clarity of expectations, responsibilities and support available.

- The Sheffield Leader develops people, and drives and enables performance. They promote a culture of respect, support, feedback, mentoring and coaching; and they enable their colleagues by giving them space and legitimacy. Sheffield Leaders empower people as much as possible within the framework of the University’s shared vision, valuing diversity within the bounds of this common purpose.

- Finally, Sheffield Leaders aspire to be authentic, by being open, transparent, fair and consistent. They also demonstrate self-awareness, humility, integrity and moral courage. The Sheffield Leader establishes trust in their judgement and motives, and inspires people to follow them.

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