Head of Department

Guide to HR and employment-related matters
This brief guide highlights the key employment-related policies and processes the Head of Department needs to be aware of, and provides a signpost to more detailed information available via the University and Faculty web pages. Your Faculty HR Team can be contacted at any time for advice on more specific queries.

An up-to-date list and contact details for the Human Resources Team for each Faculty can be found on the Human Resources webpages:
www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/aboutus/whoweare/hrservices

The Human Resources web pages provide an up to date source of University information, policies and procedural guidance: www.shef.ac.uk/hr/recruitment/induction/indevents

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1. Guidance for Heads

www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/academicstaff/hodkeyactivities provides an overview of key activities, dates and processes throughout the year.

2. Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment process:
Each department has designated Recruitment and Selection Co-ordinators (RSCs) who oversee the recruitment process through e-recruitment. They are familiar with the e-Recruitment process and will liaise with staff to ensure that all the required documentation is provided for advertising, including planning of interview dates, panels etc.

HR Managers/Advisers normally attend all academic interview panels, and are often involved in senior management and technical appointments, but not generally for researcher or less senior management/technical posts. An exception may be where redeployment is involved, or if there are other specific issues which may need professional HR advice.

There is a wealth of guidance on the University HR web pages to assist you with all stages of recruitment and selection, available at www.shef.ac.uk/hr/recruitment/induction/indevents. If you need advice at any time regarding any aspect of recruitment and selection please do not hesitate to contact a member of your Faculty HR Team.

Induction:
All new staff should receive a comprehensive induction. This process is normally co-ordinated by the Recruitment and Selection Co-ordinator, and you may wish to oversee and periodically refresh this to ensure a high-quality experience for all new starters. A number of induction events are available to new staff. These provide the opportunity to learn more about the University as well as meet other new starters. Further information is available at www.shef.ac.uk/hr/recruitment/induction/indevents. Also available is an induction toolkit for managers: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/recruitment/induction/managers.

International staff may find the following web pages helpful in providing information about moving and living in the UK. They include practical information about arrival in the UK, banks and banking, healthcare, accommodation and childcare and education: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/recruitment/induction/international
3. Information about departmental staff

Details of all the staff in your department are available to you via MyTeam, the University’s web-based staffing information management system. As HoD, this will automatically be available to you via MUSE, including staff groups, grades, absence records, age profile and other data useful for managing individuals, teams and the department as a whole. Guidance on how to use this system, including how to generate reports, is available at www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/myjob/myteam. Your PA or departmental manager will have access to MyTeamHR and will also be able to provide information and reports for you in this way. If you need more detailed information or statistical analysis than this system can offer, please speak to the Faculty HR team who can explore the availability of other specific reports on request.

Management information and reports about staff and staff costs can also be accessed via MIView.

4. Contracts of employment and other relationships

It is important to ensure that appropriate rules of engagement are used whenever anyone undertakes work on the University’s behalf. It can sometimes be difficult to determine whether someone should be engaged as a member of staff (employee) or by some other arrangement such as an agreement for services (self-employed) or bank worker. The HR web pages offer guidance on the types of employment and other contracts that apply within the University, www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/contracts, and also offer guidance to help managers decide what is the appropriate contractual relationship depending on the nature of the work that is needed via the linked Toolkit. Often a situation can be very specific and does not necessarily sit neatly within these categories – if you are at all unsure about the appropriate engagement relationship in an individual case, please contact the HR team for advice.

5. Visiting Academics/Scholars/Researchers

All requests for academic visitors must be made using the appropriate form, approved by the HoD and the Faculty Pro Vice-President (FVP). The signed paperwork is then forwarded to HR.

Academic visitors are given an Associate UCard, which allows access to the University library services for the duration of the agreement. A Visiting title is usually linked to a specific project and is normally conferred for a period of one year but may be for up to three years. No remuneration is paid. Please note that a visa may be required for the duration of their visit.

For visitors from overseas it is vital to contact HR for advice about visa requirements, which vary depending on the individual circumstances, and over time as the UK Visas and Immigration criteria change frequently. Be aware that the rules are now very stringent and some proposed visitors have been denied entry altogether. A link to the request form and further guidance can be found at www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/visitingtitles/visiting.
6. Probation

Probation applies only to Lecturers, and provides a structured induction and initial professional development, together with assessment. The HoD proposes a probationary plan at the outset, with objectives set for each of the (normally 3) years of the probationary period; this is reviewed by the FVP and HR. All probationers must gain Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy via completion of Modules 1 and 2 of PGCertTLHE or via personal pathway, unless the lecturer is exempt due to prior experience or qualifications. At the end of each academic year the HoD reviews progress and achievements against the objectives, and makes a recommendation about his/her progress. All probation forms - both objectives for the coming year and confirming a probation year are reviewed and agreed by the Faculty Probation Panel. HR issues the relevant confirmations.

If there are any concerns at any point in the process that an individual is not progressing well and may not successfully complete probation, the FVP and HR should be consulted and involved as soon as possible.

University guidance is at www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/academicstaff/probation The forms for probation planning and review are managed entirely via Google Drive. At departmental level it is normally the HoD’s PA or administration manager who ensures effective communication between all parties, checks quality/completeness of documentation and makes sure submission deadlines are met.

7. SRDS

The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that the Staff Development and Review Scheme (SRDS) is implemented for all staff in the department. SRDS takes place during the summer, and whilst it does not have any direct bearing on pay/reward decisions, it is important that SRDS discussions are open, honest, realistic and consistent with any reward recommendations. The detailed co-ordination and administration of SRDS is delegated to a suitable member of departmental staff (either academic or administrative – practices vary between departments).

Two Departmental Review Panels are held each year: DRP1 to agree pairings and timescales, and consider any key departmental strategic messages/objectives to be conveyed; DRP2 takes place after all SRDS have taken place, and reviews the process and any staff training and development requests. Full details of the SRDS and training support available can be found at: www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/srds

8. Staff development

SRDS is only one aspect of building a culture of constructive feedback, staff development and career support. The University offers a wide range of development activities, which can be found at www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/sld/proflearning/online. In addition, HR can often arrange bespoke staff development solutions if there are any particular individual or group needs which do not fit within the standard offerings. HoDs should discuss their needs (e.g. common themes arising from SRDS) with the HR Manager, who will explore the issues and the options that may be available, and involve other HR colleagues as appropriate.
The University is committed to the Research Concordat, which focuses on contract research staff and sets out standards of good practice for their employment and career management: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/ecr. As HoD your lead is important in setting the expectation for academic managers’ responsibilities towards researcher staff, particularly in relation to SRDS and contract management (see Fixed Term Contracts, section 16 below).

From time to time HR brings specific training sessions into the Faculty, for example recruitment and selection refreshers, some of which are optional and others (e.g. Chairs of interview panels) mandatory for certain members of staff.

9. The Deal – reward and recognition

The Deal recognises the contribution staff members make to the success of the University and aims to provide flexibility to its staff to choose benefits that support their lifestyle. As Head of department, you will play an active role in recognising and rewarding exceptional contributions to the University. Further information can be found at www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/thedeal

Progression within the grade – (“Rewarding Contribution” section in The Deal) – recognises that incremental progression is a reward in itself, reflecting the increase in level of skill, knowledge and application as the individual progressed up the grade. The new framework enables accelerated progression where there is evidence of sustained exceptional contribution, and increments may also be withheld in cases of formal performance, capability or conduct. Cases for accelerated increments must be agreed by a departmental panel and submitted to a Faculty panel.

A recognition scheme was launched in September 2015 to provide line managers and Heads the ability to instantly reward staff and teams within their departments.

10. Promotions

There are three ways that promotion can occur at the University and more information can be found here: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/thedeal

- Promotion by career progression: annual process for established career pathways where roles have grown through a recognised career pathway. This is the route for promotion of academic, research and teaching roles. Cases are considered at the Departmental Promotions Panel and Faculty Promotions Panel: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/thedeal/arr
- Re-grading: evaluation of roles that have developed and grown due to organisational need, based on a business case. This is the promotion route for professional staff roles and as there is no set annual process, Departmental managers are asked to discuss any potential cases for promotion with the Director of Faculty Operations in the first instance: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/thedeal/pay
- Promotion via recruitment: where there is a need for a new post of a higher grade, in the first instance consideration will be given to recruiting to this role via advertisement (either internally or externally).
11. Study Leave and Special Leave

Members of academic staff are eligible for Study Leave for the purpose of furthering their research or other study related to their University duties. Study leave is an expected privilege although not an absolute right. When agreeing to a period of study leave consideration should be given to the objectives which will be achieved during the leave (are these sufficiently ambitious), how the leave fits within the academics’ research plans (i.e. is the applied time the most appropriate to achieve their objectives) and the impact the leave with have on the Department (i.e. can teaching and administrative roles be covered). More information about study leave, including guidance on the policy and procedure, can be found on the HR webpages: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/leave/study

12. Conflicts of interest, and external engagements or appointments

As part of every member of staff’s employment contract, they are required to declare to the Head of Department any potential conflicts of interest. This may relate to relationships with other members of staff, or with students, or to roles they may hold outside the University. In addition, staff “should not normally take up other engagements or appointments outside the University during the course of employment”, and if they wish to do so, they are expected to discuss this with the HoD. It is useful to remind staff regularly (e.g. annually) about the requirement to declare any conflicts and to place any such declarations on record and make a written response, which may be forwarded to HR for the individual’s personal file.

13. Sickness absence management

The University has procedures which apply to all staff for the reporting, recording and management of sickness absence. Each department will have its own arrangements for staff to report absence, within the overall University guidance. Whilst some members of staff, by the nature of their roles, can work quite flexibly and may continue to deliver the expected output despite periods of illness, it is important that the University fulfils its duty of care and is able to support people who are unwell for short or longer periods of time. Similarly, it is important that accurate sickness absence information is recorded through myTeam for reference, as the quality of records can determine the effectiveness of any support and/or reasonable adjustments for the individual and the strategy employed to manage absence.

The University’s procedures include guidance for managers about initiating sensitive conversations and return-to-work interviews, referral to Occupational Health, factors to consider when dealing with short-term and long-term absence, and so on. All managers now receive an email to alert them if a directly-reporting member of staff is absent for four separate periods, or ten days in total, during a rolling 12-month period. At this point they should consult the guidance at www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/performance/a-z/sickness if they have not already, and discuss the situation appropriately with the individual. As every case is different, managers are encouraged to discuss individual cases with one of the HR Advisers.

It is important to maintain appropriate confidentiality in any discussions about staff health, and managers should reassure members of staff that this will be the case.
14. Problem solving procedures and legal obligations

The University’s suite of policies and procedures for addressing staffing issues can be found at [www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/visitingtitles/visiting](http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/visitingtitles/visiting). These are underpinned by the requirements of employment law, developed in accordance with ACAS guidelines, and reviewed regularly in conjunction with union representatives via the JUCC. The most commonly used procedures are:

- Disciplinary procedure
- Performance and capability
- Grievance procedure
- Sickness absence management
- Dignity at Work policy
- Research misconduct

Together with a proactive approach to managing the working environment for all staff and setting clear expectations for behaviour and cultural norms, these procedures can play an important part in reinforcing standards and clarifying the boundaries of acceptable conduct and performance. As well as the formal policies, these HR web pages now contain a wealth of guidance in the form of toolkits to help managers reflect on the situation they are facing and consider their actions. Whilst most issues can be addressed through clear communications and informal management, HoDs (and other managers) should not hold back from using the procedures where appropriate: experience shows that firm action on under-performance or unacceptable conduct can have a significant beneficial effect on team morale. Encourage your senior colleagues to raise any concerns they may have with you, so that you can show your support and advise how you wish them to proceed.

HR Advisers are happy to discuss any issues that may arise, and can advise on approaches for informal “nipping in the bud” as well as more serious matters. The key is to take a flexible approach and consider each case individually, weighing risks and benefits to decide the best way forward. In situations of conflict or tension mediation may be appropriate; the University has a number of trained mediators, and the HR team can advise if this might be a suitable option.

The University offers a range of supportive and proactive measures for staff wellbeing, which can be useful for managers to be aware of and mention to staff as appropriate. As well as the Health Management Limited (Occupational Health) service for individual casework, there is comprehensive web-based guidance at [www.shef.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing](http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing), with advice on physical and mental health, lifestyle and sources of support, and linking with the University’s broader positive health programme. In addition, the University pays for a confidential, independent 24-hour staff support line, now provided by Health Assured, which offers both counselling and personal/practical advice (e.g. financial and legal) to staff and their immediate families. Health Assured Freephone number is 0800 028 1947.

HoDs should also be aware of other policies and procedures which reflect employment law and fall within their sphere of responsibility, for example (under the same “HR Guidance” section: [www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/visitingtitles/visiting](http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/visitingtitles/visiting)):

- Anti-bribery statement
- Public Interest Disclosure
• Security of staff data away from the workplace

And of course, the
• Equality and diversity legislation and policies: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/equality

It may be appropriate from time to time to remind staff of these legal and procedural guidelines and their obligations as a member of the University.

15. Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Shared Parental and flexible working

The University is fully committed to helping working parents balance the needs of work and family life and offers various family leave policies. HoDs are responsible, on behalf of the University, for ensuring all family-related provisions are applied supportively and effectively, including pregnancy risk assessments and planning ahead for cover arrangements and return to work. There are a number of practical steps that HoDs can take to support staff through the process of going on leave, in terms of planning before the leave, during the leave period, and returning to work following the leave. Further information to assist with the planning process can be accessed via the managers’ checklist: www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/family

Many groups of staff now have the right to request flexible working (parents, carers, etc) and these requests have to be considered by the HoD. General guidance on all of these situations is available on the University HR web page www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/guidance/flexible, and for advice on specific cases at any time, please contact the Faculty HR team.

16. Fixed-term contracts

There are only certain circumstances by law where it is appropriate to employ staff on fixed-term contracts. The five criteria are:
• To cover staff absence e.g. long-term sickness or maternity leave
• To provide cover for secondments or career development opportunities
• Where business demand can be clearly demonstrated as particularly uncertain, over and above normal fluctuations
• The post requires specialist expertise or recent experience, in the short term, that is not already available within the institution
• Where the post is funded by a temporary funding source for which a date has been identified when, with significant certainty, it is believed the funding will cease.

Employees with four or more years’ continuous service on successive FTCs should be considered for transfer onto an open-ended contract, and have the right to ask for an explanation if their contract continues to be fixed-term. The University has well developed guidelines for managers, and robust financial underpinning, so that open-ended contracts can be issued wherever appropriate even if funding continues to be from fixed external sources.

The HoD is responsible for ensuring that consultation takes place with every member of staff on a FTC whenever that contract is due to expire. HR sends notification, by email, to each
line manager to direct them to myTeam on the first day of every month to highlight staff who have five months (or less) until their contract expires. This should prompt the line manager to hold the consultation meeting more than three months before their end date. It is important to keep a record of all consultation meetings for audit purposes and in case of any grievances or claims.

The department has a responsibility to try and avoid redundancy, and should consider any internal vacancies for possible redeployment of staff at risk. If extension or redeployment are not possible, the individual may be eligible for enhanced redundancy if they engage in the redeployment process. If the member of staff resigns, however, the University’s obligation is fulfilled and redundancy (statutory or enhanced) is not payable. It is important that managers make clear to HR where an individual has resigned, e.g. because they have secured work elsewhere. Full guidance on the management of fixed-term contracts is available at www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/contracts/ftc.

17. Resignations and retirements

Staff wishing to resign from the University should write to the HoD stating the date they wish to leave, taking account of contractual notice periods. When a letter of resignation is received, the HoD should confirm agreement by forwarding a copy to Human Resources, either writing a note on it confirming his/her agreement, or attaching a completed resignation form. HR will then issue a letter to the individual confirming their resignation and the date on which their employment will cease.

Members of staff sometimes wish to negotiate a reduced notice period – this will be at your discretion, taking account of business needs, handover time, etc. For academic staff and others with teaching duties, notice normally takes effect at the end of a University semester to ensure continuity of student support.

Notice periods are:
- Grades 1-6 = 4 weeks
- Grades 7-9 = 3 months
- Professorial and equivalent = 3 months (and taking account of semester dates).

Details are available at www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/leaving/resignation.html

Where a member of staff wishes to retire and access full pension benefits, they need to state this clearly in their resignation letter so that the appropriate administrative steps will then be taken. The pension schemes also now have a flexible retirement option, whereby the individual reduces his/her working commitment and accesses a proportion of pension benefits. In this case s/he needs to ask permission of the Head of Department because it is a change to the employment contract as well as needing approval to access pension benefits before normal retirement age.

Since 2011 there is no default retirement age in UK law, i.e. employers cannot compulsorily retire a member of staff at any age. Staff are encouraged to discuss their personal plans with their manager/HoD to enable forward planning, and each year the University offers a series of Retirement Planning workshops to which all staff over the age of 55 are invited.
18. Workforce planning and organisation development

Workforce planning is an integral part of business planning, and can be addressed at various levels of detail. The annual planning round is a suitable time to take stock of staffing issues such as age profiles, areas of high turnover, skill shortages, expected business growth, etc. and consider how you might address them. The answer is not necessarily like-for-like replacement, and HR can help you explore the issues and advise on creative strategies for workforce planning and development.

If you are considering structural or other organisational changes, it is important to consider carefully the impact on staff and on business continuity and productivity; again, HR staff have experience in this area and the University has recently published a new policy for managing change: whilst much of the guidance relates to formal restructure and associated risk of redundancy, the principles for communicating, consulting and supporting staff through change are also more broadly relevant.