



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

# Annual People Report 2024

Human Resources

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# Foreword

I have pleasure in introducing the 2023-24 Annual People Report.

I hope that, from it, you will get a flavour of the work that colleagues across the University were undertaking to make the University an even better place to work. Our report highlights many improvements, including: the implementation of the findings of our Grade Scale Review, improving pay for the vast majority of our community; the extension of financial assistance available to international staff seeking to live and work in the UK; extraordinary (and award-winning) developments to enhance our physical estate; and significant improvements to our management of programmes of change – a hugely important issue for colleagues across the University.

As all colleagues are aware, the Higher Education sector is under significant financial pressure and our institution is also affected by these issues. We will have to face inevitable and significant change with resolve, while maintaining our commitment to our academic mission and ambition.

Staff Experience Committee will oversee the next Staff Engagement Survey in early 2025: we hope that colleagues respond in significant numbers to this, to enable us to consider their needs and to do even more to help us grow as a community together.

**Catherine Martin**  
Vice Principal Corporate Services,  
and Convenor of Staff Experience Committee

# Introduction

In this, the second Annual People Report, we highlight the breadth, range and volume of work undertaken across the University in the 2023-24 academic year in support of our People Strategy.

We celebrate progress in some key University-wide priorities and acknowledge all the work that has been done to align these and area-specific priorities at local level.

The first Annual People Report covered the 2023 calendar year and was presented to Court in March 2024, when it was agreed that future reports would cover academic years.

The Report describes progress towards our People Strategy objectives, which is built around three key themes of enhancing our community, developing staff potential, and improving the working environment, and reflects our overarching strategic themes of equality, diversity and inclusion, sustainability and leadership.

The Staff Experience Committee ensures that the University is managing its people agenda and working towards achieving our People Strategy objectives effectively. It oversees how staff contribute to the Strategic Plan and Values and drives ongoing improvements in staff experience, building on the strengths of the current offer and through acting as the main approver of policy change.

We have established a University Initiatives Portfolio Board which oversees all large-scale projects, as we respond to lessons learned from ongoing improvements to our Human Resources and Finance systems.

### **We work together to benefit our communities, within and beyond the University**

- The University Values and Behaviours are visible in all of our work.
- We are all citizens of the University and we feel part of and care about what happens here.
- We are all included, informed and involved in what goes on at the University.
- We feel safe and well at work.

### **We work in an environment that supports and motivates us to do our best work and to achieve the University's goals**

- We design our estate to enable us to do our best work.
- Workloads are reasonable and achievable.
- People processes and systems make our lives easier.
- Equitable pay, benefits and working conditions improve our working lives.



### **We each have the opportunity for personal and professional development, to support individual and organisational achievement**

- We have regular conversations so everyone knows what and how they are doing.
- We are responsible for accessing the development we need to be the best we can be.
- Managers have the behaviours, skills and resources to do their jobs well.
- The way we recruit means we attract and retain a talented, diverse workforce.

# Strengthen our community

We work together to benefit our communities, within and beyond the University



University staff participating in a 'Day to Make a Difference'

This element of our People Strategy brings to life our Strategy 2030 Values and Behaviours, which underpin our intention to be citizens of the University. These are reflected in our policies and processes; in the way we recognise and reward role models, and through endeavour of staff that goes beyond the University, and benefits the city, the country and the world. So much of this work happens at an individual and local level and goes unnoticed. The examples in this report highlight just a small selection of the meaningful and consequential activity of staff throughout the year.

## Citizenship

Leave for volunteering, known as the 'Day to Make a Difference' initiative, is part of the University's Special Leave Policy and gives each staff member an additional paid day off each year to volunteer for a charity, organisation or cause that's special to them.

Teams in Information Secretary's Group (ISG) volunteered to support local causes. Focusing initially on strengthening the community in Edinburgh and the surrounding areas, they realised that working together fostered more of an 'ISG community' at the same time. Colleagues worked together to clean a beach, clean a canal, and support a local foodbank, where over 45kg of items were delivered to their warehouse just before Christmas 2023.

**" We have more than 400 years of excellence behind us. Working together, we can lay the foundations to make the next 400 years even better."**

Strategy 2030



University staff participating in a 'Day to Make a Difference'

At their recent away day, the HR team calculated that if every University employee used their one day of paid volunteering leave, it would add up to over 52 million hours of volunteering time over the next 400 years. This impressive total highlights the significant impact University staff can have on the community through volunteering. HR teams worked together to assemble starter packs for people who had been homeless get established in their new homes, and clean and paint garden furniture for a children's charity.

The University of Edinburgh was the first university in Scotland to be accredited as a University of Sanctuary. Webpages have been updated to include details about the Education Beyond Borders programme and information on our IASH Artist at Risk Fellowship. The University of Sanctuary page carries the latest communications, reinforcing the importance of safety and of dignity and respect.

[university-of-sanctuary.ed.ac.uk](http://university-of-sanctuary.ed.ac.uk)

February 2024 saw the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine's (CMVM) Easter Bush campus mark its commitment to promoting the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. Activities included a poster contest showcasing the work of women scientists at Easter Bush, discussions on both research culture and the future of gender equality, and sharing of research on gender disparities in veterinary medicine. The activities also linked

to outside organisations such as Dress for Success, where a clothing bank was established for donations of professional work wear, and with our own Easter Bush Science Outreach Centre colleagues, who hosted 'LabCamp' – a free, hands-on DNA workshop open to all school pupils in S5 and S6.

[edin.ac/4hqOdpG](http://edin.ac/4hqOdpG)

## Community

In Corporate Services Group (CSG), a special 'profile' edition of the regular newsletter told the story of Corporate Services – a large and complex department – through the eyes of people working there. Photographs of colleagues were included, recognising that most University staff photography is of senior leaders. This newsletter helped people feel represented, seen, and encouraged others to learn about CSG via human interest stories. Special efforts were made to ensure this was accessible and available to desk-less staff in CSG.

A new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) governance structure has been developed, which includes the University EDI Committee and its five thematic sub-committees (Disability and Inclusion; Faith and Belief; Gender Equality; LGBT+; Race Equality and Anti-Racist): allowing future work on EDI to be more structured, embedded and mainstreamed, as well as offering opportunities for colleagues to inform the University's actions. This work continues alongside our engagement and support of our Staff Networks.



The Communications team from Social Responsibility & Sustainability

The HR EDI team has monitored progress towards our equality outcomes which are due for renewal in 2025, involving work to record activity across all parts of the University for the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report, as well as consulting on shaping the 2025-29 Equality Outcomes.

Initiatives aimed at promoting good citizenship behaviours are built into our University leadership development programmes, run by HR Talent and Development, which facilitate networking across the University and promoting collaboration and sharing.

These include:

- **Senior Leader Talks:** University senior leaders, offering their perspective on leadership and sharing their own leadership journey.  
Feedback from attendees highlights appreciation for the candour and transparency demonstrated by the leaders in these talks and their courage in sharing their personal stories.
- **TED Talk Sessions:** A platform provided for alumni of the Edinburgh Manager and Leader programmes to network, connect and share experience and insights.
- **New staff meet ups:** Run jointly with the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) these are for new staff to hear about the University from those who already work here.

As part of the sessions, colleagues in different roles give 'Lightning Talks' on their experiences of working at the University. 176 new colleagues have attended 24 talks over the academic year. In their feedback, 95 per cent said they valued hearing from colleagues from across the University. 100 per cent found the University welcoming, 97 per cent said they felt proud to work at the University.

The ability to deliver excellent research is crucially dependent on our research culture: the values, expectations and behaviours that shape how we support, deliver and communicate research. The University has signed up to

the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the 2023-25 Action Plan sets out our plans under the three Concordat principles; Employment; Environment and Culture; Professional and Career Development. The first Research Cultures Action and Delivery Plan details actions and investments to improve the research culture across the University; its implementation is overseen by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD).

[edin.ac/3Cvjc4V](https://edin.ac/3Cvjc4V)

A celebration event took place in the Nucleus Building celebrating the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) Chancellor's Fellows. This event was an investment in culture and cohort building, bringing all of the Fellows together to celebrate their achievements and invite the wider staff community to find out more about their projects and view an artistic exhibition of their work.



Michael Malone, Quality Manager, Estates Department



Aisling Doyle, Duty Manager at Sports & Exercise, on the Pleasance reception desk

Research Culture was established as a category in the College's first Staff Awards, underlining commitment to improving our activity in this area. A new Research Cultures website has been launched to communicate progress on actions and highlight related work to improve our Research Cultures that has been ongoing for several years.

**[edin.ac/3VjkYeT](https://edin.ac/3VjkYeT)**

In addition, the Research Cultures Forum has been established; a group of staff and students that act as a critical friend in highlighting areas of difficulty or challenge that may need to be addressed by the University, and as a resource for it to access a broad range of views on actions that might impact research cultures. The Research Cultures Forum holds meetings that are open to all staff three times a year.

**[edin.ac/40oamOt](https://edin.ac/40oamOt)**

The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) officially launched its nine College Research Themes in January 2024, which provide clarity on the College's vision and priorities. The community being fostered around these themes serves to strengthen the collegial, supportive and inclusive research culture in CAHSS. A showcase event in the Playfair Library connected more than 100 researchers from across the College, raising awareness of the themes and work already started. A suite of resources has been developed, including promotional videos for each Theme and a series of events dedicated to each Research Theme has also taken place.

Communications and Marketing (CAM) hosted a conference to support colleagues working in communications and marketing roles across the University. The theme was Extraordinary Social and Civic Impact and looked at ways colleagues could network and build a professional community; share success stories and examples of best practice; hear from external sector thought leaders; and learn about University projects and initiatives that impact their work.

Colleagues in CAM, HR and the People and Money teams developed and delivered a process to update a new line manager mailing list, enabling direct communication with around 3,000 line managers on matters which impact their staff, rather than via senior leaders for cascade, or directly to individuals. The issuing of absence reports to line managers to support absence management processes was the first time that the University has been able to target a communication to this population, helping them to be more informed, included and involved.

Responding to staff feedback gathered in early 2023-24, colleagues in HR and Payroll evolved their approach to customer support through the launch of the Enhanced Customer Service project, focusing on providing the right support to meet customer needs and deliver the HR and Payroll processes as one team. The project included launching a weekly staff feedback survey, which collects insights on service requests. It also introduced a dedicated call-back service, focused on improving both resolution times and customer support, aligning with the request for a more personal touch, and improved time to resolution.

The Teaching Office Network in CAHSS (TONIC) comprises more junior colleagues in College teaching offices who have limited opportunities to connect with other colleagues in similar roles beyond their School. It meets to share practice and discuss development (personal and professional), for those who are often in challenging and complex roles, and build a sense of community and inclusion.



**Alistair Wallace, Senior Project Manager, and James Saville, Director of HR, in Dalhousie Land**

## Awards and recognition

2024 saw the successful renewal of the University’s Athena Swan Institutional Silver Award. This acknowledges our work to tangibly improve the experiences of staff, and endorses our five-year Action Plan. At the same time, the Roslin Institute became a double recipient of a Gold Athena Swan Award, granted in recognition of the additional efforts made to promote gender equality and address challenges for women in science.

All three Colleges celebrated staff awards this year. In CAHSS, the People of CAHSS Awards is a peer award scheme, providing all staff working within and across the College with an opportunity to let others know what a positive difference they make. It’s also an occasion to showcase the values and behaviours the College stands for as a community, and the people that role model them. This year, a record breaking 1,830 award nominations were submitted.

CMVM received more than 235 nominations, an increase from 130 last year, and a total of ten awards were given. This year the Head of College Award for Exceptional Service was awarded to all reception staff who work in CMVM buildings.

This year also saw the launch of the first CSE Staff Recognition Awards, with 181 nominations from across six categories spanning College priorities, ensuring inclusivity of both Professional Services and academic staff. Over 60 people at the College who reached a 10 years’ service milestone in 2024 were also celebrated at a special Staff Awards event in December, which was open to all staff to attend.

Staff Recognition Awards in ISG are an annual event organised and judged by their staff. More than 200 nominations were submitted across nine categories this year and the event itself was hybrid. Around 350 staff celebrated and recognised all those nominated, shortlisted and successful in each category.



University colleagues receive recognition at the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine Staff Recognition Awards



The MVM Staff Recognition Awards held in the Playfair Library

The essential work of technical staff was highlighted through the first Technician Week in September 2023. Hosted by a different campus each day, and organised by the Technician Steering Committee, Technician Week highlighted career development, visibility and the resources available to all technical staff at the University, as well as providing the opportunity to network with peers. The programme included talks about technician apprentices, professional registration and an update on the Technician Steering Group and Technician Commitment. The week also provided the setting for the Technician Awards, recognising technical staff who have excelled in particular areas over the past academic year.



2024 saw the successful renewal of the University's Athena Swan Institutional Silver Award

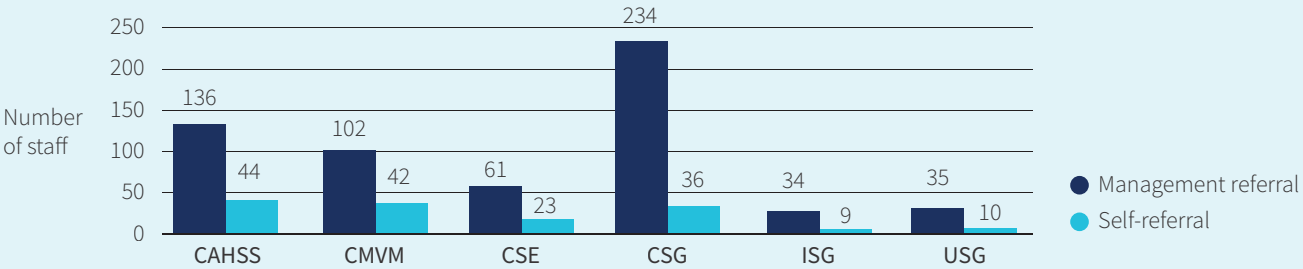


Roslin Institute became a double recipient of a Gold Athena Swan Award

Health and wellbeing

The University is committed to developing a working environment and working practices which help maintain and improve staff health and wellbeing. A significant step was the launch in August 2023 of the new Staff Disability Advisory Service (SDAS), providing advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments in the workplace to disabled, deaf, and/or neurodivergent staff and their line managers. Since its launch SDAS has received 208 referrals, 35 per cent of these from line managers and 65 per cent directly from staff members.

Another channel for providing support is through our Occupational Health Service, which promotes and maintains the health and wellbeing of employees by advising colleagues on health-related matters which affect work. In this academic year they received 766 referrals. Of those 21 per cent were self-referrals and 79 per cent were from managers. The top three reasons for referrals were medical (38 per cent), mental health (31 per cent) and musculoskeletal (15 per cent), mirroring the data for the previous year.



# Develop our potential

We each have the opportunity for personal and professional development, to support individual and organisational achievement



HR colleagues in Dalhousie Land

This part of our People Strategy focuses on the development of individuals and the organisation. Colleagues are encouraged to take responsibility for their development and a lot of work goes on across the University to ensure that access and opportunity to the right development is available and appropriate. We seek to attract and retain the most talented and diverse workforce, who are led and supported in their development by managers, who are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to do their jobs well. The current challenging external environment brings heightened focus on people owning their own development and being supported effectively to fulfil their potential, which will benefit them and help the University achieve its strategic goals.

The University offers colleagues an enormous range of development, from individual personal development and job-related training, through to role-specific career development support, and learning for each stage of a management and leadership career. Each year this offer is updated and adapted to ensure it continues to meet the needs of staff today and for the future. Over the past academic year, colleagues have taken advantage of development opportunities including on-the-job learning activities, secondments, shadowing, mentoring, coaching, attending conferences and participating in both internal and external development programmes.

## Skills and behaviours

As the University's IT and technology arm, ISG is aware of the constant evolution of technology and digital applications. While many embrace this, it can be intimidating for some, who may feel excluded and left behind, so ISG colleagues worked hard last year to ensure that digital skills are accessible, available and helpful to all. The ISG Digital Skills Programme training course delivered approximately 500 workshops that were attended by 1,600 colleagues, and 44 staff members completed a six-month Developing Your Data Skills Programme.

A University-wide, short life working group supported implementation of the 10 days of professional development entitlement for research staff; a key element of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Recommendations and outcomes included 10 days being added to the annual review section of the Conversations Hub and updated web pages to include local examples of good practice. There has also been progress in expansion of support for Principal Investigators and research leaders, and in career support for research staff.

The Continuing Professional Development Framework for Learning and Teaching aims to provide relevant and flexible professional development for all University staff involved in teaching or supporting learning. It is delivered in collaboration with Schools, Support Services and IAD, and externally accredited by AdvanceHE. Gaining professional recognition from AdvanceHE provides national endorsement for colleagues of their professionalism and commitment to learning and teaching. The three main pathways through the Framework are the Introduction to Academic Practice (IntroAP) completed by 44 colleagues, the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP), completed by 74 colleagues, and the Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA), completed by 110 colleagues across all four Fellowship levels.

Throughout the year workshops and learning on a range of EDI topics have been available to staff, including Sponsorship for Inclusion, Age Inclusion and Sex and Gender. In addition, online communities such as our EDI Leads and Gender Equality and Athena Swan Network have been developed to keep people informed.

The HR Talent and Development team launched the Conversations Hub in April 2024, to share and promote resources to help colleagues and their managers have more regular and meaningful conversations, and to develop the skills needed to make the most of them. This includes guidance on annual reviews as well as resources to support development conversations, such as career planning tools, all aligned to People Strategy priorities and University Values and Behaviours. The Hub has had more than 5,000 site visits between April and July 2024.

To ensure that we provide support to staff at all stages of their careers, an online Retirement Coaching Service has been introduced in 2024, which was developed with external experts, to support those transitioning to retirement. 11 colleagues have taken up this programme since the launch, and feedback is positive, with all participants saying they would recommend the Service to a colleague.



## Leadership and management

Our core programmes – The Aspiring Manager, Edinburgh Manager, and Edinburgh Leader – were reviewed to ensure the content and format remain relevant and aligned with Strategy 2030 and the People Strategy. Internal stakeholders and external organisations contributed as part of a data gathering and benchmarking exercise. The programmes continue to be very well received, with 569 colleagues participating this year, bringing the total number of participants to 1,892 since their launch in 2020. Of those, 1,234 have gone on to participate in our leader and manager development community groups.

Alongside these, the revamped Senior Leader Induction Programme helped new senior leaders understand the expectations of their role and the wider University context, develop peer support and a network at the University, and understand the more operational elements of their role.

As part of that programme individuals are invited to participate in our newly introduced 360-degree feedback process, which is available to all managers. It aims to help them see others’ perceptions of their leadership and management style and supports them in creating personalised development plans. 30 colleagues have participated in the process so far.

Previously known as the Head of Subject Area Development Programme, the CAHSS Academic Management Development Programme provides practical and pragmatic role-based training and development for a key academic population. With line management responsibility for most academic colleagues, these role holders are a critical part of the College leadership community. This programme provides new role holders with the knowledge, tools and techniques to succeed in role, creates a peer support network and offers opportunities to learn via a variety of formats. Designed, developed and delivered by CAHSS colleagues, they share their experience and knowledge to support and develop colleagues.

## Youth employment

Modern Apprentices are an integral part of our youth employment agenda, supporting our commitments under the Young Person’s Guarantee (YPG), which was launched by the Scottish Government in 2020 and aims to give all young people aged 16 to 24 the opportunity of a job, apprenticeship, education, training or volunteering. This year, the University made a further commitment to the YPG with the inclusion of student internships and work placements (creating jobs, volunteering and training opportunities).

### 2023-2024 Leadership and management programmes

	Aspiring Manager		Edinburgh Manager		Edinburgh Leader	
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Academic	17	10	16	9	24	23
Professional Services	88	113	83	72	36	35
Technician	9	10	14	7	3	0
Total	114	133	113	88	63	58

Recruiting Modern Apprentices and Career-Ready students (a two-year programme aimed at secondary school students aged 15 to 18, that sits alongside their studies in S5 and S6) helps the University play a part in promoting social mobility and preparing young people for the workforce. These initiatives also serve as development opportunities for our staff by providing line management experience.

Working together, CAM, Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS), and HR designed and delivered a communication strategy to support this year's Modern Apprentice recruitment campaign. Communications highlighted the benefits and impact that recruiting a Modern Apprentice can have on staff development and community engagement. Following this, the number of managers registering interest increased by more than fifty per cent.

## Career development

One-to-one career consultations continued to be popular with research staff, with 166 appointments, 28 email consultations, and 195 colleagues attending careers workshops. IAD launched a new suite of training and support for Principal Investigators and Research Leaders to help them build a supportive research culture in their team and navigate demands on their time.

[institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/research-roles/principal-investigators](https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/research-roles/principal-investigators)

This year saw the start of a review of our academic promotions process aimed at ensuring consistency of approach both within and across the Colleges. An early improvement to help staff going through this process is a reduction in the number of references and external assessors required to support a promotion application.

In April 2024, we launched the improved Learning app in People and Money, with simplified, condensed and updated guidance documents. This improved the search and browse functionality and allowed colleagues to see the status of their enrolments more easily. Managers can now search for

their team's learning status, send reminders to colleagues and assign learning to direct and indirect reports.

HR data skills and reporting capabilities are crucial in providing the University with timely and accurate staff information from a range of systems. Recognising this, HR Services launched a four-day learning event: 'Data Days – The HR Data Festival'. In collaboration with other departments including Digital Skills, and EDINA, and leveraging the expertise of HR colleagues, 15 sessions facilitated by nine different experts took place on topics including data literacy, AI adoption and implementation at the University, and the use of Microsoft solutions such as Power BI for data presentation. More than 100 people took part; with more than 85 per cent rating sessions positively.

In addition to the existing Exit Survey, summarising key trends and insights, this year saw the launch of both the Joining Experience Survey and the Internal Transfer Survey, aiming to create a comprehensive picture of staff attraction and retention trends and challenges. These surveys build on our commitment to understand and improve our colleagues' experiences and provide insights to help make the University an even better place to work for existing staff, and an attractive employer for potential new staff, at all stages of their career.



Staff in the Queen's Medical Research Institute at the Bioquarter

# Enhance our working environment

We work in an environment that supports and motivates us to do our best work and to achieve the University's goals



Colleagues outside the Edinburgh Futures Institute building

The third part of our People Strategy focuses on the physical workspace, the policies and processes that enable and support our work, and the terms and conditions of our employment with the University. We aim to make continuous improvements in these areas to remove barriers and create a positive and productive working environment. There has been significant progress over the past year, especially in pay and policies. Across the whole of the University estate, there have been innovative improvements and exciting new spaces, alongside challenges and unexpected setbacks that have caused disruption for some staff. Workload continues to be an important factor in staff perception of their working environment, and this remains a priority for consideration during the next academic year.

With more than 550 buildings, our staff work in a wide variety of premises which provide opportunities and challenges for the working environment, today and in the future. From old, listed buildings to newly built state-of-the-art spaces, staff experience is a key consideration in how the estate is used, maintained and developed. This report reflects some of the ways these spaces have been improved in the past year and will continue to be developed in future years.

Wherever they work, staff will benefit from policies, processes and pay and benefits that have been improved in the 2023-24 academic year. Working with our trade union partners, we celebrate the progress made and acknowledge the plans for further work in these areas in the coming year.



Students and staff enjoying improved catering facilities outside the Nucleus Building

## Buildings and the estate

The new Edinburgh Futures Institute officially opened in June 2024 becoming one of the largest institutes for interdisciplinary learning, research and innovation in Europe, and bringing together people finding innovative solutions to some of the world's biggest problems. The building will also bring benefits to the local community, with a new public square, a café and exhibition and performance spaces. The Futures Institute sits within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and is one of six innovation hubs supported by the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal's Data-Driven Innovation programme.

Responding to feedback from the Staff Survey and our newly established Town Halls, catering facilities at King's Buildings have been improved, with regular external food trucks on site now.

Other parts of CSE have made improvements to the working environment to enhance staff wellbeing, including Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (ECCI), where staff have worked with Estates to improve collaborative useful spaces, soften the shared environment, and use space more effectively, which has received positive feedback from staff.

Not all activity to improve the working environment comes as a result of long-term planning. Argyle House is one of the primary workspaces of ISG's 800 employees. When it suffered serious flooding, a major refurbishment was required, presenting an opportunity to improve staff experience. The workspace was planned to combine culture, physical surroundings and technology; an environment where staff would feel comfortable, energised, valued and where their surroundings were conducive to individual privacy as well as collaboration, interaction and teamwork. A new ISG HR and Facilities Staff Experience Board now facilitates open, continual dialogue about the workspace, ensuring that staff voices regarding the physical environment are always heard.

Another challenge for some staff this year has been the impact caused by the need to remove Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) from eight buildings. The works required to buildings containing small amounts of RAAC have been completed and only work to buildings requiring significant interventions is still underway. This caused considerable disruption to staff working in those buildings but extensive consultation with the occupants helped ensure that the impact was minimised as far as possible. All of the RAAC removal and remediation is planned to be completed by Spring 2025.



Information Services Group's workspace at Argyle House

Construction work is now well underway for a new building for the School of Engineering on the King's Buildings campus, which will provide new learning & teaching facilities as well as workspace for staff.

## Process improvement

In October 2023 the HR Process Improvement Review and Prioritisation Survey gathered feedback from colleagues involved in HR end-to-end processes, underpinned by the implementation of the People and Money system, leading to the development of an HR improvement plan. A leadership group has been established, along with a wider user group from across the University, to deliver this work over the next two years.

In this academic year, several automations have improved end-to-end processes, resulting in the wider distribution of local HR reports. A new suite of HR reports has received very positive feedback, with data being used in research into staff mobility and youth employment projects and in the Grade Scale Review project. In addition, it has prompted process improvements elsewhere, for example, the Audit team no longer need to flag reporting on retention trends, which, as an area of concern, they previously needed to do.

In addition, HR have completed an overhaul of our recruitment guidance documentation: simplifying the process while emphasising fair and inclusive hiring practices.

## Pay, benefits and conditions

A major step towards our People Strategy objectives was the Grade Scale Review. This was the first major review of our pay scales since 2006 and it improved pay for most staff. Colleagues from HR, Finance, Strategic Change, CAM and the People and Money Service in ISG worked collaboratively over the course of almost two years. More than 8,000 staff immediately received an uplift of 1 to 3 spinal points, as their salary was below the new minimum starting point for their grade. On 1st August 2024, almost all staff

were eligible to receive the automatic annual increment, including more than 6,000 who otherwise would not have, because they were previously at the top of their grade. Additionally, an exceptional increment was awarded to the 228 colleagues at the top of the normal zone for their grade or in the contribution zone who would not normally have received an increment.

The timing of this project had one additional particular benefit; one of the UK Government criteria for Skilled Worker sponsorship is to meet minimum salary thresholds. In April 2024 these thresholds significantly increased for individuals applying for a visa from outside the UK. In some cases, sponsorship for the appointment would have been delayed, or halted, but because the Grade Scale Review was implemented at the same time as the thresholds, the impact on existing staff and those applying to join the University was minimised.

The University expanded the financial assistance available to international staff this year, in response to rising costs of a visa to live and work in the UK. Additionally, the cost of indefinite leave to remain applications has risen by 17 per cent over the past four years, so the increased support will enable international staff to consider Edinburgh as a place to come to work.

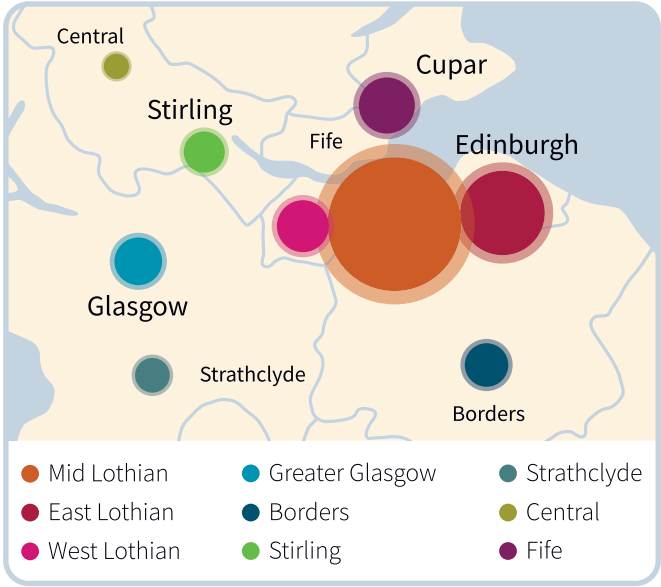
Another innovation aligned to this project was the development of the 'My Salary' page in People and Money, which allows full-time staff to view their annual salary, previous salary, grade and grade-step information. It allows part-time and guaranteed hours' staff to use the new calculator to determine their pro-rata salary.

Working in partnership with our recognised trade unions, we have made significant progress in providing greater job security to staff by reviewing and reducing our use of fixed-term contracts. We will continue to review our use of these on an ongoing basis, only using them where we really need to.

A number of policies have been updated to enhance staff experience at the University and ensure our policies remain appropriate and legally compliant. This includes adding Carers Leave provisions to the existing Special Leave Policy, and updating our Partner Leave provisions in response to legislative changes. We have also updated our existing Conflict of Interest Policy to create an easier and more consistent process. A new Menopause Policy has been introduced to offer support and guidance to colleagues experiencing menopause, or who may be indirectly impacted. Other changes included increasing annual leave and improving pension benefits for staff at Grades 1-5.

The launch of the Hybrid Workplace Policy and update to our Flexible Working Policy in 2023 are helping to address new ways of working following the impact of Covid-19 and the increase in off-campus working patterns.

The map shows where our staff live now:



While most staff live in or within commuting distance of Edinburgh, we are a very international community, with more than 120 nationalities in total represented.

As a leading international university, we engage in a diverse range of activities that require staff to be located overseas, from short-term assignments to permanent appointments. The support and risk/cost management activity for these moves has increased in recent years and is likely to continue, given the University's international ambition and reach.

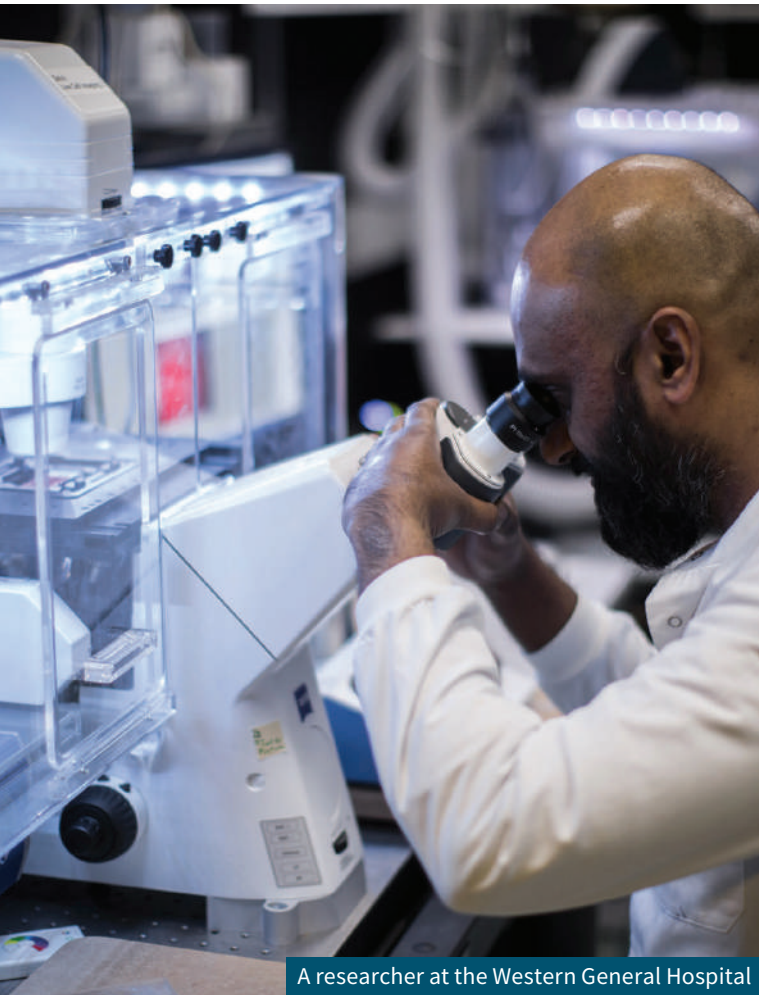
The HR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team helped local areas foster more inclusive working environments across the University by producing new resources, including new EDI data dashboards in partnership with Governance & Strategic Planning; a Trans Hub to bring together resources to support both staff and students; new guidance for conducting Equality Impact Assessments; and events for EDI Leads to share good practice and foster community. Work also continues to embed our Diversifying Recruitment approach, supported by improved guidance and simplified processes.

Many parts of the University have Investors in People (IiP) accreditation. Edinburgh Global (EG), part of the University Secretary's Group (USG) has worked with IiP for several years on a three-year assessment cycle against the We Invest in People Framework. The Framework is tailored to the needs of Edinburgh Global, providing insight into how colleagues are feeling about their community and working environment. The IiP assessment is used in tandem with – and not instead of – University support and frameworks, complementing and multiplying the value of staff surveys, HR advice, frameworks and policies. EG has a Silver IiP Accreditation and has a detailed Our People Plan to help their continual improvement journey.

All of this represents the range and volume of work undertaken to enhance our working environment. In this large, devolved university, there is always much more happening than can be included, but this reflects the progress being made in some significant strategic areas.

# Looking ahead

Much of the work to achieve our People Strategy aims takes place over more than one year. Several projects due to be delivered in the coming year are focused on continuous improvement and build on already good practice. Future activity will be influenced by the financial challenges we must address and our desire to be even more successful in the future.



A researcher at the Western General Hospital

The 2025 All-Staff Engagement Survey will provide useful insight into where we are doing well and where future efforts might be directed. Feedback from staff in other surveys, informal conversations, and in their willingness to stay at the University for long careers indicate that it is already a great place to work, and we seek to consolidate what is already good while making continuous improvements in the future.

## **Strengthen our community**

The next All-Staff Engagement Survey will take place in early 2025. The question set will be the same as that used in 2018 and 2023, to allow for comparison. Results will be shared with all staff and each area will develop its own response to local priorities arising from the feedback alongside University-wide responses.

An external audit of our CAM-managed communications to staff and students is underway, with a full report due in 2025. It will provide quantitative feedback on communications from senior leaders, including emails, in-person and online staff meetings and videos or blogs, with a focus on finding out how useful these are felt to be and how likely colleagues are to engage with them. The outcomes will be used to inform proposals for short-term, medium-term and long-term improvements to our communications and will feed into the wider review of, and any investment in, digital communications and engagement as part of the University's Digital Strategy.



The Forest and Peatland programme highlights the University's commitment to a sustainable forward-thinking future

CAHSS research plans for 2024-25 include a showcase event, which will be open to all colleagues in the University and possibly external collaborators. There will also be an away day for theme co-leads, which includes a range of role development opportunities, as well as wider networking.

The Research Cultures team are planning the following events and conferences to support Researcher development:

- Open Research Conference  
[openresearch.ed.ac.uk/conference/](https://openresearch.ed.ac.uk/conference/)
- Research Support Services Conference  
[edin.ac/3WvWDnz](https://edin.ac/3WvWDnz)
- Technician Week  
[technicians.ed.ac.uk/technician-events](https://technicians.ed.ac.uk/technician-events)
- Good Research Practice Week  
[research-office.ed.ac.uk/good-research-practice-week](https://research-office.ed.ac.uk/good-research-practice-week)

Equality Outcomes 2025-29 will set the direction of our EDI work for the next four years, including:

- Expansion of EDI Learning with new eLearning modules and workshops;
- Launch of a Neuro-inclusion Hub, to meet needs of staff and students who are neurodiverse or are seeking to foster more inclusive environments;
- Improving information and resources on LGBT+, Faith and Age;
- An 'EDI Conversations' programme will allow more spaces for people to learn together;

- A new repository will improve the process for and display of our Equality Impact Assessments.

At the heart of our Values and Behaviours is dignity and respect. This is an important area of focus currently, as a new policy is in development and will be launched in the next academic year.

In 2024, the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group was refreshed to include a focus on newly identified priorities. These include:

- to better assert the importance of research;
- to broaden the understanding of academic freedom and freedom of expression within our community as positive and essentially democratic values;
- to address the intersection between academic freedom, freedom of expression, and equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Group has been restructured to build capacity and expertise to deliver its renewed remit. Four Workstreams and two 'Task and Finish groups' will take forward the new priorities in the next academic year.

Our Major Incident Communications Plan will undergo testing in 2025, in coordination with College/department communications leads. CAM are coordinating their Crisis Communications Plans to ensure that we have robust



Staff working in a hybrid space within EFI

protocols in place across the University.

## **Develop our potential**

Demand for the three flagship Leadership and Management development programmes continues to be strong. All cohorts of the Edinburgh Leader, Edinburgh Manager and Aspiring Manager programmes for the next academic year have been filled through just one nomination round, with a waiting list in place. This is the first year since 2020 that will not involve a second round of nominations and where demand has outstripped supply.

CSE also plan to deliver a programme of development for their colleagues based on feedback from their Learning and Development Survey conducted in 2024.

The Young Person's Guarantee is due to be reviewed in 2025. Through its involvement, the University helps to champion young people's social mobility and improve their career aspirations, by offering a unique insight into the world of work and bridging the gap between education and the workplace, making it a key part of our work in both the Community and Development aspects of our People Strategy.

## **Enhance our working environment**

Taking into account budget and planning priorities, we will continue to invest in the maintenance and modernisation of the estate, helping to create cutting edge spaces for staff and students to innovate, learn, advance our world leading research, and collaborate.

A review of the staff benefits currently on offer at the University will involve benchmarking best practice from other universities, an evaluation of the current benefit platform supplier, and external and internal communications ensuring staff fully understand everything that is available to them as an employee of the University. We will also be conducting our biennial Equal Pay Audit in 2025.

Two new employment policies are due to be launched; a Reasonable Adjustments Policy and a new Trans Staff Policy. We will also review the Relocation Policy to ensure alignment with HMRC guidelines and make our offer more transparent and user friendly.

Work will begin to implement recommendations from the Talent Attraction project, undertaken by the HR Talent and Development team this year, which evaluated our current recruitment practices, and provided evidence-based proposals for future work on improving our approaches to attracting and retaining the best talent for the University.

Following the 2023 HR Process Improvement Review and Prioritisation Survey a two-year improvement plan has been developed to deliver six work packages: Improved training and engagement; Recruitment; Onboarding; Service requests; Alerts and notifications; and Personal data maintenance and document storage HR and Finance Transformation Info Hub.

Phased over the next year, there will be further changes to the look and feel of the HR related content in People and Money, aimed at improving user experience and accessibility.

All the achievements in this year's report, along with the examples of work planned, offer a snapshot into the quality and quantity of investment and effort across all parts of the University to achieve all our People Strategy objectives and ensure that this is a great place to work. While there is more to do, in increasingly challenging circumstances, to strengthen our community, develop our potential, and enhance our working environment, this annual report offers an opportunity to reflect on the significant progress that has been made, and celebrate the outstanding commitment, collaboration and cooperation of our colleagues.

# 5,000

visits between April and July 2024 to the new **Conversations Hub** site launched by Human Resources Talent and Development team



# 36

**days of annual leave** for all full-time staff regardless of grade



# 17,000+

**colleagues work at the University**



**Launch of CSE Staff Recognition Awards**



**Online Retirement Coaching Service** launched by Human Resources



# 1<sup>st</sup>

university in Scotland to be accredited as a **University of Sanctuary**



**Edinburgh Futures Institute opened in June 2024** one of the largest institutes for interdisciplinary learning, research and innovation in Europe

# 100+

people attended the **Data Days – The HR Data Festival** held by HR Services in collaboration with other departments

# 569

colleagues participated in **The Aspiring Manager, Edinburgh Manager, and Edinburgh Leader** programmes



**CMVM Head of College Award for Exceptional Service** awarded to reception staff working in CMVM buildings



# 8,000+

colleagues immediately received an uplift of 1 to 3 spinal points as a result of the **Grade Scale Review**



# 120+

**nationalities** are represented in the University



**Menopause Policy** introduced to offer support and guidance to colleagues experiencing menopause, or who may be indirectly impacted



# 1,830

nominations submitted for the **People of CAHSS Awards**



**Enhanced Customer Service project** launched by HR and Payroll to help provide the right support to meet customer needs and deliver processes as one team



# 1,600

colleagues attended the **ISG Digital Skills Programme** training course workshops



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