The Sussex People Strategy

Encompassing HR/EDI/OD/Reward

The vision

We will create an open, transparent, inclusive, and vibrant culture, welcoming challenge, but always remaining true to our values. We will support and develop people to be the best version of themselves. We want to be renowned in the sector as a champion of best practice in inclusivity and diversity, leading to improved engagement and morale

Success will be defined by the following success measures:

Getting the basics right

- To introduce efficient, automated processes to maximise the ability of leaders and staff to make data-based decisions, driving workforce planning by end 2027
- To have a fully functional e-recruitment system in place by end 2023
- To have a systematic review of policies relating to people/HR in place with full Equality Impact Assessments completed and reviewed by end 2023.

Improving Inclusivity

- The KPI of "proud to be working at Sussex" will be improved year on year reaching a target of being above comparator average by 2025
- To make reductions in the gender pay gap annually and have an equitable transparent pay framework by 2024, in line with the Inclusive Sussex Strategy.
- To Improve representation at senior level with regard to gender, ethnicity and disabled staff by 2025. Explicit targets to be modelled and added here by end 21/22.
- We will engage with our stakeholders to understand what they value and measure our success in delivering what is valued.

Harnessing talent

- To have a Total Reward Strategy written and agreed, for all staff to be aware of and understand by the end of 2023
- To have a well-established and valued programme of ongoing leadership development and personal development for all, by 2025
- To ensure a process of annual review (currently known as appraisal) accessible for 100% of staff and a success rate of 95%, with an average value rating of 80% in all areas by end of 2023

Increasing engagement and wellbeing

- To have a wellbeing strategy in place with a process setting and monitoring actions to ensure ongoing improvements, by 2025, aligned with the Inclusive Sussex Strategy.
- To ensure that wellbeing is seen as a priority area and that links are made to all people processes, such as annual reviews, interactions with staff and management awareness
- We will embrace the hybridisation of working practices and leverage this to enhance wellbeing

The main aims of the People Strategy are:

1. **Getting the basics right**: *ensuring our processes are efficient, effective, rapid and streamlined. This means automating processes to ensure consistency of experience, building a Digital HR solution for all our processes and creating clear, Policies which are fit for purpose. Ensuring our policies are up to date, effective, understood and easy-to-follow.*

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2. **Improving inclusivity**: *driving forward the actions including creation of an equitable pay framework that will result in reduced pay gaps with benefits and career progression criteria that are open, transparent and foster equality. This includes clear review processes and promotion criteria, job evaluation benchmarks and pay framework. To ensure the new policies are inclusive and support the creation of a work environment in which our diverse workforce has a sense of belonging and the facility to be their authentic selves. Staff will feel valued for their contribution, and recognised for their success.*

3. **Harnessing talent**: *Beginning with recruitment and induction, we will ensure a seamless employee journey in which talents and abilities are recognised, while aspirations and development needs are encouraged and supported. We will create a learning culture in which staff will be equipped with the tools, skills and confidence for success and career progression, and will adopt the behaviours and cultural values of Sussex. Harnessing talent will support delivery of the People Strategy by enabling staff to work efficiently and effectively in the pursuit of excellence, allowing us to undertake effective talent management and succession planning. We will also maximize the use of technology and offering development solutions unconstrained by physical location to allow development pathways for all of our staff.*

4. **Increasing engagement and wellbeing**: *Ensuring Sussex is a place that people are proud to work at is a key aim measured through the staff survey results. We will identify the key drivers that would shift the dial in relation to staff wellbeing, as a happier more motivated workforce will ultimately result in improved employee engagement. The aim is to write a wellbeing strategy which is research and data led to help identify the key initiatives we need to take to improve our staff wellbeing going forward.*

How our People Strategy aligns with our values

1. The People Strategy is focused on getting our processes not only right, but also effective so that our people are treated with the appropriate level of concern and confidentiality. We want to develop trust with our people by offering them more efficient processes, with managers and leaders that are trained and competent in using those processes and procedures, to ensure integrity.
2. We feel that by getting the basics right, focusing on EDI and wellbeing issues and harnessing our talent we will be showing kindness to our people and valuing the work they do, whilst also encouraging them to be kind to the people they come into contact every day.
3. Our commitment to valuing and celebrating diversity is evident in the work and the objectives the EDI team have been doing and continue to challenge themselves and the rest of the institution to get better at doing. We believe the combination of the People Strategy and the revised Inclusive Sussex shows our commitment to highlight injustices and inequalities and work towards a truly inclusive place for everyone to work and study.
4. This People Strategy cannot be achieved without the collaboration and commitment of others across the University, we have to work with others and we will use the people strategy as a tool to bring stakeholder groups together and resolve differences wherever we can.
5. This People Strategy is ambitious, there is a lot of work to do and a lot of improvements to make, but we have challenged ourselves in order to improve the experience of working at Sussex for everyone. It is going to be a lot of hard work and dedication to change and improve systems and processes and we believe the strategy does show not only ambition, but also courage.

Gap Analysis:

- The Original People Strategy was agreed by SPRC in March 2020 which was just before Covid struck and until very recently we have been in survival mode and whilst things have

been incrementally driven forward in the meantime, there are still a lot of things to do.

- The HR Divisional team wasn't clear, had too many goals/aims/strategies and lack of clarity and direction
- Community not engaged - need agreement, alignment and engagement with key stakeholders beyond SPRC which has not previously been achieved
- Bringing together an agreed, clear strategy and priority areas which link to the University strategy and already agreed priority areas (Inclusive Sussex)
- Regular updates on progress to the community
- Clarity for those doing the work and what is achievable with the resource available
- The People risk is currently one of the top strategic risks in the University, equal to Student Experience, and there is a need for all leaders to prioritise this strategy and be responsible for driving the changes required
- The HR Division has a significant number of vacancies including the majority of the EDI Unit, at a time when there is a challenging recruitment market.
- Issues around workload, stress, not feeling valued are all driving low engagement scores across the University.

1. Recruitment and retention

The University operates a paper-based recruitment process, which is administratively burdensome, duplicates effort, is inefficient and inconsistent with the expectations future employees may reasonably have of a 21st century global University. Designing end to end processes underpinned by a leading-edge e-recruitment system would resolve these deficiencies and transform the applicant and recruiter experience.

Under-investment in HR content within the Sussex website and opportunities to exploit the benefits of using social media as a recruitment tool has left the University behind its competitors, both in the UK and internationally. Planned and targeted investment would offer effective ways of raising our profile; promoting our values; our key successes; areas of expertise; and future ambitions, thereby significantly improving our ability to tailor recruitment to reach our target audiences.

The University is facing increasing difficulty in attracting candidates to posts at all levels, not only is the candidate experience poor (as per the above), but the primary reason being cited for this is the uncompetitive rates of pay that the University offers, driven by the national pay scale. The introduction of a Pay Policy (within the Total Reward Strategy) would give clarity on the University's approach to pay, and would align to the institutional strategies and aims.

2. Career development

The Staff Survey results and feedback through other fora, demonstrate significant dissatisfaction about the lack of career and professional development opportunities for Professional Services and Technical staff, who represent over 40% of the University's workforce. This lack of investment is also detrimental both to individual colleagues and the University, with staff exhibiting low morale and possessing skills that may be out of date and no longer aligned to their relevant professional bodies. Similarly, the provision of academic leadership development has suffered from a lack of strategic leadership and direction as well as fragmented provision.

3. Leadership and Management

There had been significant investment in enhancing the capability and capacity of the University Executive Group, however that team is now fundamentally different with only 25% of the original

members still remaining. So, as well as needing to reinvest in development of the Executive Group this is also being extended to the wider University Leadership Team (ULT). Programmes now need to be designed and delivered for managerial staff at all levels. After the last few years, it is now clearer for leaders that they need to operate within a significantly constrained financial envelope and following on from Size and Shape there is a requirement for people at all levels to implement a major change agenda whilst motivating teams and maintaining morale through the most challenging period for the higher education sector of modern times. The skills, quality and talents of staff across all our areas of the University will be a key factor in delivering our strategies and securing a robust financial and sustainable future founded on a highly engaged, high-performing workforce.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

There has been good progress made in the delivery of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The PVC for Culture Inclusion and Equality was appointed in 2021 and started in October. We have also committed more resource into this team, including a dedicated Assistant Director for EDI to lead the team. The challenge now is to focus on improving diversity at all levels of the organisation, especially across our leadership roles, through programmes of learning on inclusive practice, anti-racism learning, coaching, mentoring, and competency-based succession planning. The University's commitment to attain and retain charter marks, such as, the Race Equality Charter, Athena SWAN, Disability Confident and Stonewall Champion, will guide our work to becoming a more inclusive community.

Areas of on-going concern, identified through the Staff Pulse Survey, focus on complex subjects such as harassment, bullying, freedom of speech and a fear to speak up. It is essential to understand these perspectives, leading to the introduction of new policies, learning opportunities and a wide range of organisational development interventions, rooted in community engagement, to foster fundamental culture change. Staff need to be confident that when they identify issues or behaviours that negatively affect them, there is a clear signposted route to address their concerns and trained managers who know how to respond to unacceptable behaviours in an effective and sensitive manner.

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Timeline of AIMS:

AIM	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Getting the Basics Right					
Union Discussion Period					
HR Policies Review					
E-Recruitment Business Case					
HR Digital Strategy					
HR Digital Programme Implementation					
Improving Inclusivity					
Bullying & Harassment					
Allyship					
Gender Pay Gap					
Marginalised Group Representation					
Anti-racism Learning					
Harnessing Talent					
Induction Process					
Annual Review/Appraisal Process					

AIM	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Career Development					
Leadership Capability					
E- Recruitment Implementation					
Total Reward Strategy Outline					
Total Reward Strategy Implementation and union negotiation					
Increasing Engagement & Wellbeing					
Wellbeing Strategy					
Wellbeing awareness, prevention for managers					
Implementation Wellbeing Strategy					

We will deliver our aims by:		
5. **AIM 1 - Getting the basics right**: *ensuring our processes are efficient, effective rapid and streamlined. This means automating processes to ensure consistency of experience, building a Digital HR solution for all our processes and creating clear policies which are fit for purpose. Ensuring our policies are up to date, effective, understood and easy-to-follow.*		
Key actions to be taken to deliver Aim 1	**By whom?**	**By when?**
1. Write a Digital HR strategy and business case tender for a complete Digital HR system that will ensure efficient and effective service delivery; deliver employee and manager self-service reducing transaction times and delivering savings; improve HR reporting capability.	Interim DDHR	August 2022
2. Create a business case for the sourcing and implementation of an e-recruitment system, which will be a permanent solution and will then link into the new full Digital solution is implemented.	AD R&R Interim DDHR	September 2022
3. Use the 16 week negotiation term (June to September 2022) as an opportunity for pragmatic negotiations with the unions to review and update HR policies that ensure legal streamlined, accessible, transparent information transfer and deliver intended outcomes. Negotiate any changes in agreement with Council.	DDHR DHR COO/Provost/PVC R HRBP Policy HRBP	July 2023
4. To have a Digital HR Programme which ensures the full implementation of a new HR Digital system, which offers self service to all managers and leaders and staff.	DDHR DHR	August 2027
5. **AIM 2 - Improving inclusivity**: *driving forward actions including creation of an equitable pay framework that will result in reduced pay gaps, with benefits and career progression criteria that are open, transparent and foster equality. This includes clear review processes and promotion criteria, job evaluation benchmarks and pay framework. To ensure the new policies are inclusive and support the creation of a work environment in which our diverse workforce has a sense of belonging and the facility to be their authentic selves. Staff will feel valued for their contribution, and recognised for their success. This work will be undertaken in continued alignment with the Inclusive Sussex Strategy.*		
Key actions to be taken to deliver Aim 2	**By whom?**	**By when?**
1. We have previously committed to halve the gender pay gap via a range of interventions aimed at enabling career progression for women at various stages, this will be reviewed to ensure we have a reliable and modelled metric for reducing the gap,	AD EDI PVC CEI DHR	2024

with the aim of being sector leading. We are committed to publish all pay gap data and deliver on current action plans to reduce all pay gaps.		
2. Develop a programme of coordinated work across student and staff experience to address the concern of staff in relation to witnessed and received bullying, micro-aggressions and harassment/disrespectful behaviour. Use staff survey data to identify underlying causes and set targets for improvement.	AD EDI PVC CEI DHR	April 2023
3. Support the delivery of an allyship programme which aims to foster a culture of constructive dialogue about difference and a willingness to reduce "othering"	AD EDI PVC CEI DHR AD ODCW and R&R	September 2023
4. Enhance the existing community engagement structure to build stronger and more staff networks representing marginalised groups that collaborate with each other and inform/shape our work to facilitate a fair, open and inclusive environment	PVC CEI AD CEI AD ODCW	December 2023
5. Support the delivery of agreed support for anti-racism learning across the institution and the elimination of structural and systemic racism. All staff to have accessed anti racism learning.	AD EDI PVC CEI	December 2023
6. We will engage with our community using a variety of channels to understand how to best meet their wishes.	DDHR	Ongoing
6. **AIM 3 - Harnessing talent**: *Beginning with recruitment and induction, we will ensure a seamless employee journey in which talents and abilities are recognised, while aspirations and development needs are encouraged and supported. We will create a learning culture in which staff will be equipped with the tools, skills and confidence for success and career progression, and will adopt the behaviours and cultural values of Sussex. Harnessing talent will support delivery of the People Strategy by enabling staff to work efficiently and effectively in the pursuit of excellence, allowing us to undertake effective talent management and succession planning. We will also maximize the use of technology and offering development solutions unconstrained by physical location to allow development pathways for all of our staff.*		
Key actions to be taken to deliver Aim 3	**By whom?**	**By when?**

1. Ensure that the induction process is adhered to across the University, incorporating a local welcome to include familiarisation with work group and area, clarity of job role and expectations, and regular reviews during probationary period, assignment of a 'buddy' to help new hires find their way and promotion of employee engagement networks to help staff gain support for their personal identity as well as their role and become part of the Sussex community beyond their team.	AD ODCW	December 2022
2. Design an effective annual appraisal/review process that focuses on a review of the past (assessing progress against existing objectives), a preview of the future (agreement about future objectives, success measures and key milestones) and the agreement of personal and career development goals. The review should also focus on "how" things are done, not just "what" so it will include a review of how staff have demonstrated our values, employee well-being and individual development in role and/or for the future and any development plans or support.	AD ODCW	September 2023
3. Design and deliver a range of personal and career development offerings for staff across all grades that enable technical competence and progression, enable existing, aspiring and new managers to fulfil their roles, and develop those who progress into leadership roles.	AD ODCW	September 2023
4. Enhance our leadership capability and capacity and promote greater diversity at all levels of institutional leadership by adopting proactive strategies to identify and nurture talent early, to support effective succession planning in building the next generation of academic and professional leaders.	AD ODCW	September 2024
5. Implement e-Recruitment to deliver a slick, easy and positive applicant and recruiter experience. Removing duplication of work and giving recruiting managers far greater control and engagement in the recruitment process.	AD R&R	December 2023
6. To develop a total reward strategy which: ensures we offer a competitive remuneration package; Enables performance related pay for our most senior roles; Explores and provides access to a range of 'lifestyle' benefits - for example discounts on products, services, public transport, health insurance and the possibility of salary sacrifice schemes; Provides a range of no and low cost ways of recognising and rewarding good work; Recognises and enables	AD R&R DDHR DHR	Outline strategy October 2022

flexible working as an important element of our reward package. We would also want to review the allowance structure/model and ensure it is competitive within the sector.		
7. Negotiation of the reward strategy and agreement with campus trade unions and committees to be completed, ready for implementation.	AD R&R DDHR DHR COO/Provost/PVC R	January 2024
AIM 4 - Increasing engagement and wellbeing: *Ensuring Sussex is a place that people are proud to work at is a key aim measured through the staff survey results. The aim is to identify the key drivers that would shift the dial in relation to staff wellbeing, as a happier more motivated workforce will ultimately result in improved employee engagement. The aim is to write a strategy which is research and data led to help identify the key initiatives we need to take to improve our staff wellbeing going forward. Issues around workload, stress, and not feeling valued are all driving low scores.*		
Key actions to be taken to deliver Aim 4	**By whom?**	**By when?**
1. To analyse the available data and create a clear wellbeing strategy with aims, actions and resource implications.	New AD ODCW	January 2023
2. To provide a range of awareness, prevention & early intervention training for managers and staff to ensure the knowledge and skills to understand how to spot signs of ill health in self and others, take action to intervene and support, know where to go for help.	AD ODCW	September 2023
3. To align the implementation of the wellbeing strategy with a clear action plan, linked to the people strategy and building a robust case for any resource requirements and business benefits linked to these.	ADODCW DHR	January 2024

For this strategy to be delivered effectively, the following also need to be in place:

1. Resource, senior leadership support and investment necessary to support the negotiations around pay and working conditions and the Digital HR agenda immediately.
2. Exemplary leadership across all areas of the University to foster the culture change necessary to realise our ambitions
3. Active leadership and genuine commitment and support across Schools and PS Divisions to deliver the goals of the People Strategy, including willingness to release colleagues for learning. Using clear policy frameworks and partnership working with those areas upon which key elements of this Strategy depends, including IT Services and General Council, Governance and Compliance.
4. Highly effective and engaging communications strategy, delivered both institutionally and at local level to inspire and connect with staff across the University.

What would stop us being able to deliver this strategy (key risks to its implementation)?

1. Catastrophic income drop, resulting from a combination of Augar, poor Teaching Excellence Framework/Research Excellence Framework/Knowledge Excellence Framework and/or falling student demand.
2. Inability to fund the scale of change required to meet the changes necessary to transform.
3. Lack of buy-in across the University and a failure at different levels of leadership to own and lead implementation of the change agenda
4. Culture change occurring too slowly or too inconsistently.
5. Failure to collaborate and join-up approaches across different disciplines.
6. Ineffective prioritisation of projects and works across the University.

How will this strategy help us mitigate key institutional risks?	
Industrial action disrupts education and the student experience, and causes strain on internal resources.	The University has established detailed arrangements to ensure business continuity and the effective management of any strike action, or action short of a strike. The University has created a Business Continuity Steering Group responsible for anticipating and assessing risks and making recommendations to UEG and the Vice-Chancellor. Further risk of industrial action and agreements for further negotiations with unions, have meant that critical resource will be taken away from BAU and or other prioritised projects in order to address the points within the agreement.

Lack of staff engagement reduces performance and increases turnover.	The University has placed people at the centre of its Sussex 2025 and has a specific KPI/KPT to measure how proud staff feel about working at Sussex. The University deploys a wide range of strategies to create a strong sense of staff engagement including: significant investment in leadership and management development to enhance the quality of leadership across the institution, the establishment of networks to meet the needs of under-represented groups within the University community aligned to the commitment to attain kite marks which will make the University more inclusive, for example, relating to race, disability and LGBT +. The use of open fora by the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, to enable staff to ask questions about any topics, help to create a more open, accessible and transparent culture.
Failure to adhere to university policy requirements	Quality management (accountability, simple and effective processes). Continuous improvement programme. Regular audits of process and consequences for failure to follow processes.
Failure to recruit, develop and retain talented staff materially impacts the University's ability to deliver world-class teaching and research	Development of an institution of which staff are proud. Recruitment and retention strand to our People strategy. Far greater focus on engagement and communication by local leadership and management. By introducing proactive and targeted recruitment strategies, the University will be able to attract and retain the best talent to support our core strategic aims.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion analysis
This strategy supports the University's commitments to EDI with a strong emphasis on staff and student engagement. Through the development of the People Strategy, the Inclusive Sussex Strategy the Estates Strategy and the Information Technology Strategy, the University will seek to reduce inequalities in outcomes for individuals enabling all staff and students to realise their potential. As standard, all HR policies, procedures and processes will be impact-assessed and actions will be taken in response to the findings to uphold and enhance the University's EDI principles. The University's leadership development programs will be founded on our five values and this commitment will be followed through in our recruitment, promotion and discretionary pay review processes. EDI and Unconscious Bias training are now mandatory for all those in

decision-making roles in these processes.

The KPI to halve the University's gender pay gap by 2025, which forms one of the four success measures for this strategy, has been a bold and ambitious target. Modelling will be undertaken to ensure we have an achievable stretch target that we aim to deliver through the implementation of our gender pay gap action plan.

We will become a people-focused university that recruits, develops and retains an engaged and motivated workforce. We will reduce areas of underrepresentation, celebrate diversity, and provide equal access to employment and progression opportunities for all staff. This will be achieved through the introduction of competence-based frameworks to support career and professional development. In addition, EDI training provision has been extended to cover all aspects of diversity and this commitment will be further enhanced by seeking accredited status under nationally recognised Charter marks, such as Disability Confident and becoming a Stonewall top 100 employer.

A responsive system for reporting on the progress and impact of HR EDI actions will be agreed with the PVD Culture Equality and Inclusion, as part of the refreshed Inclusive Sussex Strategy and supporting governance arrangements.