



U H R

Universities Human Resources

Annual Review 2024/25

WWW.UHR.AC.UK



Introduction

The UHR Annual Review is a good opportunity to pause and reflect. Not only on the last year for UHR and its members, but the way in which it's changed over a much longer period. Just like its member universities, UHR has survived and thrived by adapting, by anticipating and meeting the needs of its current and potential stakeholders, understanding the operating environment, and becoming an integral part of the higher education ecosystem. I've been at the helm of UHR for 20 years, and in the sector since 1991 and I've never seen a more turbulent and difficult period for higher education than we're experiencing now. Yet our reach to individual people professionals has never been stronger, enabling us to develop and equip people at all stages of their career with the resources and skills they need to deliver in challenging times. Technology, whether it's AI, web-based resources, software such as Power BI or just better use of data, enables us to understand and meet our members' needs and to work more effectively. We're partnering with key stakeholders who need people professionals to help shape and deliver their own missions, whether it's Universities UK and the Transformation Taskforce, Jisc and its development of HESA and innovation and technology within HE, or the CIPD, HPMA and PPMA through our MoU, enabling transfer of knowledge, skills and people between sectors and across the profession. Collaboration with the other professional associations within Professional HE Services (PHES, our 'umbrella' organisation) brings practical benefits to HE providers, whether it's with HESPA on designing the HESA return, BUFDG on employment taxes and international workers, or AUDE and a drive to improve diversity in estates and facilities.

The current financial climate is challenging, and people professionals are facing significant pressure as they lead and deliver restructuring and transformation, which can take a personal toll on individuals as well as teams and organisations. Our Transformation Tuesdays series has been a really practical, unique free resource to equip and support those members. We've provided many free webinars and other online opportunities to learn and share case studies and information, partnering with

commercial organisations and sector experts as appropriate, and the vast majority of what we do is free for members to access - Wise Wednesdays and our Inclusive Futures series being two examples.



The year has had many high points: nearly 3000 people engaging with our annual online Conference; record entry numbers for our UHR Awards, including the new Digital and Technological Innovation and Change category, enabling us to showcase good practice across the sector. Our member Special Interest Networks have over 1000 people professionals sharing information, case studies and learning that are core to their role. Our TrailBlazer development programme and in-person Summit and Connects events are inspirational, always energising and essential for making and renewing connections and developing people at every stage of the career journey. The saddest event of our year was the sudden death of our former Chair Paul Boustead, whose untimely death left a big gap in our professional world. It's also been hard saying goodbye to a number of longstanding colleagues, some of whom we write about later.

What lies ahead? More change, certainly. We're finalising a new UHR strategic plan, as the current one reaches a conclusion. AI and other technological innovations will enable both UHR and its members to work more effectively if we use it wisely. We're recruiting a one-year, fixed term Project and Research Officer to help our members with extra work arising from transformation and restructuring, and we'll be announcing details of a CPD discount voucher for every HE Provider to help access UHR CPD activities. We'll continue to enable and energise, equip and empower, engage and explain, for people matters in the UK HE sector and beyond. Because people and education will always matter.

Helen Scott
UHR Executive Director

Message from the Chair of the UHR Executive



Reflecting on a Remarkable Year of Progress and Connection



Since joining the UHR Executive and becoming Chair in September, it has been a privilege to witness firsthand the depth, impact, and integrity of the work taking place across our organisation in partnership with all of you - our members.

I have been continually impressed not only by the scale of activity UHR delivers, but by the values that underpin everything we do - collaboration, responsiveness, and a genuine commitment to the development of people across the sector. UHR is growing stronger through its networks, learning from its members, and continuing to deliver meaningful, future-focused support.

In the face of constrained budgets and sector-wide uncertainty, UHR has continued to offer high-quality development opportunities, from flagship programmes for HR professionals at all levels to responsive, topical webinars such as our session on Condition E6 and the launch of Transformational Tuesdays. I believe these initiatives reflect UHR's ability to listen, adapt, and innovate.



UHR's value to its members cannot be overstated. At a time when many professionals across the sector are working under considerable pressure, often with limited resources and rising expectations, the ability to connect with peers, access timely and relevant development, and find a supportive professional community is absolutely vital. UHR provides that space - a trusted network where people can share, reflect, recharge, and grow. The strong engagement across our events and networks makes it clear that this support is not only needed, but deeply appreciated.

As we look ahead, I feel encouraged by the direction we are taking. The launch of data-focused initiatives, the Inclusive Futures webinar series, and the return of the Remit Survey all reflect an organisation that is forward-thinking and committed to supporting the evolving needs of our profession.

UHR is now developing its next five-year strategic plan, taking us from 2025 to 2030, and I'm pleased to be part of shaping this next chapter, ensuring we continue to grow and adapt alongside the changing demands of the higher education environment. We will be reaching out via the regional networks to get your input before the plan is finalised.

Working in the sector allows me to bring a current, practical perspective to these discussions, helping ensure that UHR's work remains relevant, grounded, and closely aligned to the real challenges and opportunities our members face.

It is an honour to Chair the Executive, and I encourage everyone to stay engaged, get involved, and help shape what comes next.

Margaret Ayers

UHR Chair & Chief People Officer at Canterbury Christ Church University
June 2025

UHR Annual Conference 2025

A Celebration of Connection, Insight, and Innovation

From 13 to 15 May 2025, UHR hosted its flagship Annual Conference, once again embracing the virtual format to ensure accessibility for all member institutions across the UK and Ireland. This year's event saw record-breaking participation, with over 3,000 members registering to enjoy a rich programme of professional development, networking, and shared learning.

As always, our plenary speakers at UHR25 offered thought-provoking insights and inspiration, helping us to navigate the evolving landscape of higher education.

Perry Timms, Chief Energy Officer at PTHR and a leading figure in organisational development, shared his expertise on business change and performance, drawing from over 30 years of experience.

Amy McKeown, a renowned strategist in mental health and workplace wellbeing, delivered a powerful session on how institutions can respond to the escalating mental health crisis providing strategies to support HR teams and beyond. With a track record of implementing large-scale, evidence-based wellbeing strategies across sectors, Amy's session equipped members with ideas they could act on immediately.

Concluding the conference, **Dr. Heather Melville OBE**, Senior Managing Director at Teneo and Chancellor of the University of York, delivered an inspiring session reflecting on her leadership journey, offering valuable insights into fostering inclusive and effective leadership.





The conference featured an exciting lineup of speakers, breakout sessions, and specialist workshops, offering fresh insights into the key challenges and opportunities facing HR teams in Higher Education. Expert-led sessions covered a wide range of topics, including the impact of AI and automation, evolving leadership models, and strategies for fostering inclusive and sustainable workplace cultures to name just a few.

One of our favourite moments of the conference was the announcement of the 2025 UHR Awards for Excellence in HR. UHR Chair Margaret Ayers and host Kim Frost revealed this year's winners and runners-up, celebrating the exceptional work taking place across our member institutions. Their achievements showcased innovation and impact, offering inspiration to us all. We look forward to hearing more from these teams during the Awards Showcase in the autumn.

The virtual format not only facilitated widespread participation but also ensured that all sessions were recorded and made available on-demand. This allowed members to revisit sessions at their convenience and share insights with colleagues, maximising the value of their conference experience.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all contributors, including our premium partners, People Insight and Shakespeare Martineau, for their generous support. Their involvement, along with that of our other sponsors, speakers and member universities, enriched the conference experience and underscored the collaborative spirit that defines the UHR community.

As we reflect on the success of the 2025 Annual Conference, we are reminded of the strength and resilience of our HR community. The shared commitment to learning, innovation, and excellence continues to drive our collective progress.

We look forward to building on this momentum in the coming year and invite all members to contribute to the ongoing dialogue and development of our profession. Our call for participants for the 2026 conference will be made in autumn 25 and if you have expertise to share we'd love to hear from you.

The UHR Awards for Excellence in HR

We were delighted to announce the winners of the UHR Awards 2025 on 14 May at our Annual Conference. These awards offer an important opportunity to recognise and celebrate the remarkable contributions of HR and organisational development teams across the higher education sector.

This year's entries once again demonstrated the creativity, commitment, and strategic insights that are driving real, lasting change in our institutions.



In 2025, we were pleased to introduce a new category - The UHR Award for Digital and Technological Innovation and Change - as part of our continued effort to reflect the full breadth of the people profession's impact. This addition acknowledged the growing importance of digital transformation in shaping the future of work and HR service delivery. Alongside this, entries across all categories showcased the sector's determination to lead with purpose, whether through inclusive culture change, wellbeing strategies, or ambitious performance and resourcing initiatives. The depth and diversity of this year's submissions are a powerful testament to the profession's continued evolution.

Our judges were once again deeply impressed by the quality and scope of the entries. The commitment, care, and forward-thinking approaches on display were truly inspiring. We'll be launching the 2026 UHR Awards early in the new year, and we encourage teams across the sector to consider submitting their work. We look for evidence of impact and innovation, and for projects that others can learn from and apply in their own contexts. We'd love to hear your story.

To all who entered, we extend our sincere thanks. Sharing your work helps advance our shared understanding of effective, people-focused practice and strengthens the entire sector.

Congratulations to the UHR Awards 2025 winners, representing:

**Cardiff Metropolitan University
Coventry University
King's College London
Leeds Trinity University
London South Bank University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Nottingham Trent University
University of Stirling**

Congratulations also to our runners-up from:

**Coventry University (for 2 categories)
Durham University
Edge Hill University
University of Birmingham (for 2 categories)
University of Strathclyde
University of Sussex**



**Congratulations to our shortlisted institutions,
whose projects stood out across a highly competitive field:**



**Canterbury Christ Church University
Edge Hill University
Kingston University
Middlesex University
Ulster University
University of Cambridge
University of Derby
University of East London
University of Exeter
University of Kent
University of Lincoln
University of Northampton
University of Oxford
University of Surrey
University of Warwick**

The UHR Award for Organisational Transformation, Effectiveness and Performance

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING



Transforming Academic Promotions: A Strategic Approach to Recognition, Inclusion, and Leadership Development

Human Resources & Organisation Development

The University of Stirling has transformed its academic promotions approach to embed fairness, transparency, and strategic alignment with institutional goals. This has driven cultural change, positioning promotions as a key enabler of career development. A data-driven and evolving process - supported by regular reviews and debriefs - has led to measurable impact: successful applications rose from 88% to 95%, female academic leaders increased by 5.2%, the gender pay gap reduced from 18.7% to 13.9%, and female promotion applications grew by 20%. With holistic criteria, structured feedback, and tailored support, Stirling's individual-centred model offers a replicable framework for sector-wide success.

The UHR Award for Culture Change and Organisational Development

From Insights to Action - Leadership, Learning and Development

Organisational Development

King's College London transformed its learning and development strategy to tackle low staff satisfaction, limited career progression, and high attrition. By leveraging its Business School and shifting to hybrid learning, training interventions rose from 600 to 7,400 annually -without increasing costs. Four new development pathways boosted internal promotions by 20% and reduced attrition from 10% to 6%. Diversity-focused initiatives narrowed gender and ethnicity pay gaps by over 4%. Staff satisfaction with L&D more than doubled, with a £3.20 return per £1 invested. This accessible, efficient model sets a sector benchmark, enhancing engagement, career growth, and long-term organisational success.



KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

The UHR Award for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



How Manchester Metropolitan University is becoming an intentionally inclusive University

EDI Team

Through its Inclusive & Diverse Culture and Great Place to Work strategies, the University is building a thriving, values-driven community. Central to this is its bespoke Inclusive Leadership Model, designed to reflect the institution's unique context. This underpins the "Intentional about Inclusive Leadership" (IAIL) programme, founded on five principles: Empowerment, Authenticity, Collaboration, Fairness, and Valuing Diversity. Initially for leaders, IAIL now spans all staff, embedding inclusive leadership at every level. The programme has driven measurable cultural change, improved engagement, and increased diverse representation. Externally recognised as best practice, it strengthens the University's employee value proposition and competitiveness in recruitment.



The UHR Award for Reward, Resourcing and Recruitment

COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

From Transactional to Strategic: Coventry's Recruitment Evolution

People Team

Faced with rising costs and inefficiencies, Coventry University Group transformed its recruitment through a strategic, data-driven resourcing model. By creating a centralised in-house function, the team reduced agency reliance, enhanced efficiency, and improved candidate experience. Key outcomes include £432K in cost savings within 12 months, offer acceptance rates rising to 97% through a total reward approach, and integrated EDI with real-time data monitoring. The shift empowered hiring managers to engage in strategic workforce planning, improved vacancy control, and introduced salary forecasting. This transformation positions HR as a strategic enabler, aligning recruitment with long-term sustainability and inclusive talent acquisition.



CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Staff Wellbeing at Cardiff Met

*Organisational Development,
People Services*

The UHR Award for Wellbeing

At Cardiff Met, wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do. We prioritise the health and resilience of our students, staff, and wider community, recognising that supporting our people is key to sustained excellence. Our creative, proactive, and visible wellbeing approach includes Mental Health First Aiders, seasonal wellbeing events, and safe, judgment-free spaces for open conversations. Post-COVID, we've embraced flexibility, recognising that everyone's needs and challenges differ. By offering tailored support and removing barriers to wellbeing, we empower individuals to thrive - fostering a compassionate culture where everyone can perform at their best.

The UHR Award for Digital and Technological Innovation and Change

Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Job Evaluation

People and Culture Team

This innovative project modernised HR processes through machine learning, reducing subjectivity, saving time, and improving outcomes - despite financial and resource constraints.

It exemplifies co-creation, uniting professionals, academics, and students to drive cross-disciplinary innovation. The result: an AI-driven tool with broad sector relevance, including potential application in the NHS. The project successfully accessed alternative funding, demonstrated the value of AI in enhancing HR decision-making, and enriched student experience with hands-on research. It not only advanced institutional capability but also bolstered the university's reputation for innovation and collaboration -showcasing how technology and partnership can transform people practices in higher education and beyond.



The UHR Award for HR Star



**LONDON SOUTH BANK
UNIVERSITY**

Anna Jastrzebska

Anna's journey at London South Bank University reflects outstanding dedication and growth. Beginning as an international student from Poland, she progressed from graduate to Recruitment Assistant, quickly earning a reputation for impact and expertise in areas like UKVI and HRIS. Now Employment Services Team Leader, Anna has built a high-performing team, improved external audit outcomes—including a "substantial" UKVI rating—and led key projects like Customer Journey mapping. Her coaching style, technical acumen, and commitment to continuous improvement have earned her multiple accolades. Anna's leadership, empathy, and operational excellence make her an indispensable asset to both the HR team and the wider university.



The UHR Award for Exceptional HR

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

Empowering People



HR Team

Nottingham Trent University's HR team has championed the "Empowering People" strategy, driving innovation, collaboration, and positive disruption to benefit staff and students. Key achievements include leading local collective pay bargaining with a total reward approach, securing stability through strong trade union partnerships, and introducing a market-based reward framework with tailored benefits. Career development was boosted through the Career Compass and "Talking Talent" pilots, alongside expanded mentoring and inclusion initiatives. New HR tools enhanced leadership decision-making, while lean practices and internal development opportunities reinforced continuous improvement - delivering financial sustainability, cultural transformation, and meaningful progress in a rapidly evolving higher education landscape.



Continued Professional Development

Growing Together in Challenging Times

This year, UHR's CPD programme has been defined by resilience, innovation, and connection. In a climate where many member institutions continue to face limited budgets for development, we remained committed to delivering accessible, high-quality learning opportunities that make a real difference.

We successfully delivered three of our four flagship programmes – Middle Leaders, Developing a Business Partner Mindset, and Delivering Impact as an HR Administrator. These largely online programmes offered more than just knowledge; they created safe, inclusive learning spaces where colleagues from across the UK could connect, build lasting peer networks, and grow together. Thanks to Mills & Reeve for generously hosting the face-to-face final day of Delivering Impact.



Our agility in responding to sector needs was a defining strength this year. When discussion around the new Condition E6 on sexual harassment spiked on our noticeboards in late 2024, we acted quickly to address the need for more understanding. In January, we hosted a responsive, high-impact webinar that attracted almost 200 members – ensuring they had timely insight and guidance at a critical moment.

We brought that same spirit of responsiveness to Transformation Tuesdays, a new initiative designed to explore pressing sector challenges through practical, thought-provoking sessions that inspired change and collaboration.



Alongside these new initiatives, we reimagined a longstanding tradition. Our Showcasing Good Practice series – rooted in celebrating the success of our award winners – evolved into a dynamic fortnight of learning rebranded to the ‘Awards Showcase’. In each session, winners and runners-up from our seven award categories shared insights, answered questions, and engaged in candid conversations about what worked and what didn’t. With over 370 attending and great feedback, this new format breathed fresh life into a valued tradition.

No review would be complete without a special mention of our incredible legal partners. Wise Wednesdays ran for nine weeks in the autumn, captivating audiences with practical and thought-provoking content on topics ranging from Psychological Health and Safety to Freedom of Speech and even covering what might a Labour government mean for HE. These sessions continue to be a cornerstone of our knowledge-sharing offer.

Together, these programmes reflect what CPD at UHR is all about: meeting members where they are, responding to real-world challenges, and creating opportunities for growth, connection, and inspiration. As we look ahead, we remain committed to developing people, supporting careers, and strengthening the sector - together.



Naomi Holloway
CPD Manager

UHR Connects

HR Collaboration Across the UK

The same sense of value and connection has been clear in our UHR Connects in-person events, which in 2024 brought members together in London, Leeds and Edinburgh and will return to the North, South and Scotland in 2025 and early 2026.

Designed as inclusive learning days for HR business partners, these events have been developed in close collaboration with our local teams to ensure they address the specific needs and priorities of our members. It's been encouraging to see strong attendance and engagement from teams keen to make the most of accessible, local opportunities.

We know in-person time together still matters, and we remain committed to balancing budget-conscious delivery with meaningful face-to-face connection.





TrailBlazers 2025

Continued Growth and Success

In February 2025, building on the success of TrailBlazers 2024, we brought together a dynamic new cohort of 16 delegates for a powerful and immersive leadership experience at Edgbaston Park Hotel. Once again, Leatham Green, Transformation Director at Oracle, generously supported the programme by delivering insightful sessions and securing sponsorship that covered the majority of venue costs.

Over two transformative days, our delegates demonstrated impressive growth and confidence. The programme concluded with each delegate delivering a powerful, four-minute legacy statement, without notes or prompts - showcasing the clarity of their vision and personal development.

I've already had a colleague tell me they could clearly see the difference the programme has made. That kind of feedback says it all and really highlights the positive impact this experience has had on me!

TrailBlazers doesn't end when the event does. The cohort remains active and engaged through a thriving Microsoft Teams channel, supporting one another and sharing opportunities to further their development. We are especially proud to share the following achievements from this year's group:

Senior HR Summit (June 2025)

Congratulations to Gemma Andrews (UCL), Isobel Stokoe (Oxford), and Mariam Wahid (University College Birmingham) on securing places.

CUPA Conference (October 2025)

Tom Jones (Teesside) will represent the cohort at this prestigious international event.

UHR Executive Co-opted Place (2025–26)

Lisa Bryant (Brighton) has been appointed to the UHR Executive, further strengthening the TrailBlazers' voice in strategic decision-making.

In addition, Tom Jones and Fiona Dorrington (RCA) joined Leatham Green in delivering a conference business session at this year's UHR conference.

We continue to look for ways to give TrailBlazers career exposure and opportunities to get involved, ways to celebrate our award winners and ways to deliver meaningful knowledge and development to all our members, suggestions can be made at cpd@uhr.ac.uk

“

Grab the opportunity with both hands! A fantastic coming together of inspiring, aspirational minds that provide the perfect soundboard to give and receive ideas, facilitated and coordinated in a way that ensures everyone involved yields an outcome.

”

Senior HR Summit

Strategic Minds. Shared Purpose. Stronger Leadership.

With three successful editions to date, the Senior HR Summit has quickly become a cornerstone event in the UHR calendar - reflecting both its growing success and the ongoing demand for meaningful in-person engagement. Held in Liverpool in June 2024, the Summit brought together Chief People Officers, HR Directors and their deputies from across the sector for 2 days of focused connection, collaboration and strategic thinking.



Designed with senior leaders in mind, the Summit continues to deliver a powerful blend of learning, insight-sharing and space to reconnect with peers. In a sector where challenges are increasingly complex and ever-changing, the opportunity to step away from the day-to-day and engage with trusted colleagues face-to-face remains invaluable.

We're grateful for the strong member support that has shaped the Summit's evolution, and we see its continued growth as a reflection of the sector's enthusiasm for shared leadership and innovation. As always, we welcome your feedback on format, timing and topics - but it's clear the Summit is now an established and vital element of UHR's offer to its senior membership.





There was an amazing amount of thought and preparation put into this event by the UHR Team and it produced a very high-quality event. There are things I learned that I will not forget about for a very long time, and I am very grateful.



Events remain a core part of our member offering, and we've continued to deliver a diverse range of opportunities to ensure all members can engage and learn - whether through webinars, CPD programmes, conferences, or in-person events. I'm especially proud of highlights like our three-day online conference reaching over 3,000 members, the Senior HR Summit for 120 leaders in Liverpool, and three successful Connect events across the UK.



Julie Baxter
Activities and Events Officer

Transformation Tuesdays:

Supporting HR Change Across the Sector

Transformation Tuesdays was a standout series of practical, solution-focused webinars, created in direct response to the needs of UHR members and a testament to the value of the UHR team's responsive, member-led approach. Curated with input from HR professionals across the sector, each session was designed to address real operational challenges faced during transformative projects in higher education. By bringing together expert legal insight, practitioner experience, and space for meaningful peer-to-peer learning, the series offered both strategic guidance and everyday solutions. With its flexible, accessible format and a strong emphasis on collaboration and shared learning, Transformation Tuesdays exemplifies how UHR is not only listening to its members but actively delivering tailored support that makes a difference.

Inclusive Futures

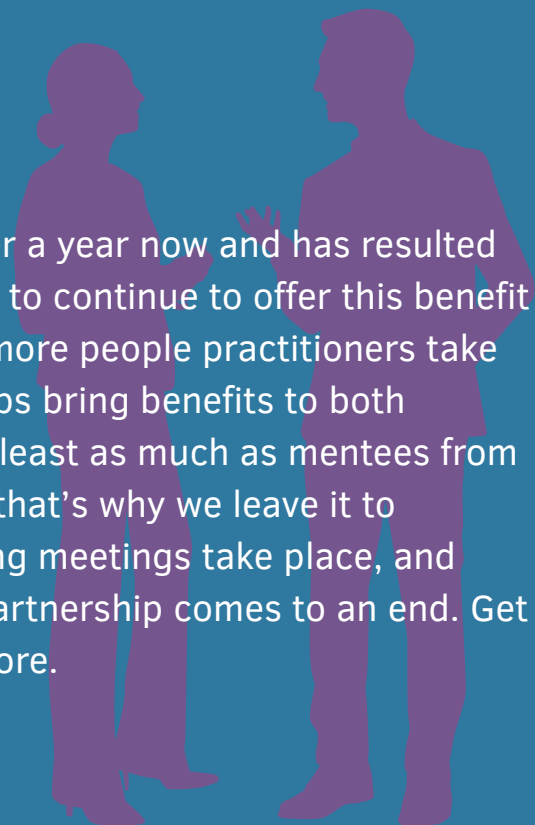
Building Inclusive Workforces for Tomorrow

In 2025, UHR launched a new and thought-provoking webinar series exploring the future of roles in higher education through the lens of inclusivity. Spanning six sessions, the series shone a spotlight on innovative practice across the sector, covering topics such as inclusive recruitment, disability and visible difference in the workplace, career development for technical staff, and diversity in both academic and professional services roles. Held during accessible Thursday lunchtime slots, the sessions offered practical insights, sparked reflection, and encouraged forward-thinking approaches. With strong engagement from members, this series has enriched our collective understanding of how universities can build more inclusive, representative workforces for the future. We hope to continue this series with additional sessions in 2025 and beyond, given the importance of sharing research and facilitating meaningful discussions on workforce inclusivity.

Mentoring

Mutual Learning, Meaningful Growth

Our mentoring programme has been running for over a year now and has resulted in over 100 partnerships. We're delighted to be able to continue to offer this benefit at no cost to members, and would love to see even more people practitioners take advantage of it. We know that mentoring relationships bring benefits to both parties, with research showing that mentors gain at least as much as mentees from taking part. We also know that time is precious and that's why we leave it to members to determine how and when their mentoring meetings take place, and whether they want to be "re-matched" when their partnership comes to an end. Get in touch with us if you or your team want to know more.



Networks

Specialist Networks, Shared Strength

One of UHR's standout achievements in recent years has been the remarkable growth of our specialist network groups. Over the past two years, participation has expanded significantly, with more than 1,000 individuals now engaging over 150 member institutions. These networks provide vital spaces for peer support, knowledge sharing, and deeper conversations on specialist topics and demanding periods. Each group operates in its own way, but all aim to foster collaboration, solve shared challenges, and offer a professional community for those in often-isolated roles. We're always open to developing new networks where there's clear member demand, whether by directly supporting their launch or facilitating their creation. If you or a colleague aren't yet involved, now is the time to connect with the network that will help you most.

KPI and Data Analytics Forum
Policy Network
REF, Research Assessment and
Research Culture Group
Ways of Working Group

Career Pathways Network
Employee Investigation Network
Engagement Group
HR Operations Network
Inclusive Recruitment Network

Stronger Together

The Power of Connection in Challenging Times

This year has reinforced for me just how vital our UHR member networks are. In the face of financial pressures and constant change, these spaces offer more than support - they foster shared understanding, fresh thinking, and a real sense of community. I've seen how connecting with others who "get it" can spark ideas and build the confidence to act, even in uncertain times. It's a reminder that we're not in this alone. When we come together, we move faster, think smarter, and go further. That spirit of collaboration is something I truly value and believe we need now more than ever.



Emma Brookes
Strategic Projects and Research Manager



Emma Walton-Pond
Communications Officer

Evolving Communications

Shaping Communications Around Members

Over the past year, we've continued to refine how we communicate with members, guided by your feedback. A new termly email now provides a clear overview of key events and opportunities at the start of each term, while our redesigned weekly RRU allows members to filter through news and resources for easier access to relevant content.

We're also seeing strong engagement on LinkedIn - our main social media platform - where our community has grown by 28% and our posts made over 42,000 impressions. These improvements reflect our commitment to clear, timely, and useful communication, and we'll keep evolving with your input.

If you haven't already, follow UHR: Universities Human Resources to stay connected with us online.

UHR Remit survey

Mapping the Sector. Informing the Future

2024/25 has seen the release of our biennial remit survey enabling UHR to build a more detailed picture of how HR and Organisational Development functions operate across the higher education sector - highlighting diverse approaches, resourcing models, and the evolving challenges facing our profession. Just as importantly, it allows us to share these insights with you, helping members benchmark their own institutions, gain a clearer view of sector-wide trends, and identify opportunities for development. We continue to encourage engagement in shaping this valuable resource.



From Data to Direction

Navigating the Future with Insight and Evidence

This past year I have been looking towards the future. Whether that be our brand new 'Inclusive Futures' webinar series, where we considered how the higher education workforce is changing and adapting, to building our REF network (which now has 100+ members) as we edge closer to the 2029 exercise, I'm excited to see what is in store for people professionals at a pivotal time for the sector. I've also enjoyed seeing almost 50 of our members become more confident with data through our ongoing CPD in this area, as well as working with our sister membership organisations including BUFDG and HESPA on joint projects which bring benefits to even more professional services staff. None of us has a crystal ball, but whatever the future holds, UHR is here to offer continued support to HR and people professionals right across the UK.

Sophie Crouchman
Strategic Projects and Research Manager







Governance

UHR continues to thrive as part of the PHES (Professional Higher Education Services Ltd) family of specialist organisations. Through PHES, we benefit from essential back-office support - including IT, payroll, and membership services, enabling us to operate more efficiently and focus our efforts where they matter most. Under this umbrella we group and collaborate with other higher education specialist organisations including AUDE (the Association for University Directors of Estates), AULP (the Association of University Legal Practitioners), BUFDG (the British Universities Finance Directors Group), CHEIA (the Council of Higher Education External Auditors), CUBO (the Council of Universities Business Officers association) and HESPA (Higher Education Strategic Planners Association). These close connections not only enhance the relevance of our resources and events, but also ensure that UHR members gain valuable perspectives from across the wider higher education landscape.

Our core staff team remains a small one, currently comprising eight staff with a total of 4.3FTE, although we will be joined by a one-year fixed-term colleague by September. This team is made up of Helen Scott (Executive Director, 0.6FTE), Emma Brookes and Sophie Crouchman (Strategic Projects and Research Managers, both 1FTE), Naomi Holloway (CPD Manager, 0.2FTE), Julie Baxter (Activities and Events Officer, 0.6FTE), Emma Walton-Pond (Communications Officer, 0.5FTE) and Jemma Biernat and Ruth Turner (Membership Officers, 0.2 FTE each).





Finance

UHR's longstanding financial policy is to maintain reserves sufficient, in the view of the UHR Executive and the PHES Board, to be likely to see us through any foreseeable loss to our budgeted income. UHR's income is largely derived from two sources: the successful running of our annual Conference and Summit, and universities' membership subscriptions. These two sources of income allow us to staff UHR's central team to the level detailed above and provide a wide range of services for free or at a heavily subsidised cost. As mentioned in this review, the number of projects and activities for, or on behalf of the UHR membership, that we can provide has risen significantly in recent years, returning value to universities. In the year ending 31 July 2024, UHR returned a surplus of c.£36k which has been used to deliver the services previously described, and a surplus of £14k is forecast for the year ending 31 July 2025. A deficit budget has been set from 1 August 2025, forecasting a loss of c.£139k – this is carefully considered, and due to using reserves to fund discounted CPD, and the employment of a fixed term post, supporting members in a challenging climate. At the Annual General Meeting on 13 May 2025 a subscription increase of 2% was agreed (in practice, costing £15 - £45 more per annum for each HEP). In reaching this decision the Executive was acutely aware of the financial pressures on UHR's member institutions; however, we believe that UHR has never been more valuable or essential to Chief People Officers, HR Directors and their teams, or to the sector, and feel strongly that UHR membership remains excellent value for money.



UHR Executive Committee

CHAIR

Margaret Ayers (Canterbury Christ Church University)

VICE CHAIRS

Louise Edwards-Holland (Nottingham Trent University)

Joanne Race (Durham University)

TREASURER

Eilidh Fraser (Abertay University)

OTHER MEMBERS

Regional and devolved nations group Chairs

Ian Wright (University of Sheffield) - NE Chair

Claire Rolstone (University of Reading) - South Chair

Magi Hoppitt (Coventry University) - Midlands Chair

Richard Brooks (University of Bath) - SW Chair

Gordon Scott (University of Strathclyde) - Scotland Chair

Sian Cushion (Swansea University) - Wales Chair

Pamela Flynn (Manchester Metropolitan University) - NW Chair

Louise Lester (Queen Mary University of London) - M25 Chair

Nationally elected representatives

Sarah Setchell (University of Derby) to 30/09/2025

Donna Dalrymple (University College London) to 30/09/2026

Dean Morley (Richmond, the American International University in London) to 30/09/27

Pete Gibbs (Wrexham University) to 30/09/2025

Co-opted representatives

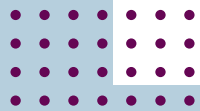
Kate Walmsley (University of Southampton) to 30/09/2025

Huge thanks to those that have left their positions on the Executive committee during this period including Naina Patel, Richard Cloughton and Mary Luckiram.

What our members say

"A friendly approachable atmosphere. UHR connecting people and raising key matters!"

UHR Connects North 2024



"Very good presenters, well organised from pre-event, during and post event comms."

UHR Connects London 2024

"Good mix of topics balanced with opportunities for networking. Appreciated the table seating with colleagues currently doing a similar role - it made for good conversations and networking."

Connects Scotland 2024

"The organisation of the event, speakers, comms and how it is managed and led on the day are absolutely first rate. We are very lucky to have such a fabulous UHR team."

Senior HR Summit 2024

"Engaging and insightful content from start to finish."

Senior HR Summit 2024

"The variety of sessions and speakers was excellent."

UHR Conference 2025

"The planning which goes into the conference is clear to see, it's so well organised and we are exceptionally lucky to have this event available to us."

UHR Conference 2025



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