

CEDARS 2023

Results for the University of St Andrews:
Analysis and commentary

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Introduction and context

Survey basics and reporting methodology

This report summarises analysis of responses to the 2023 Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) from the University of St Andrews staff. CEDARS explores the views and experiences of researchers about their employment and career and professional development. It is designed to reflect the principles of the revised Researcher Development Concordat and the results should provide evidence that participating institutions can use to assess their progress in relation to implementation of the Concordat's principles and as useful evidence towards requirements for the European HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) or other recognition schemes, including environment considerations within Research Excellence Framework (REF) submissions.

Much of the commentary that follows is based upon comparisons of St Andrews's responses with the aggregated responses from all 66 participating HE institutions, which comprised 9,061 responses from staff (doctoral researchers have been excluded). The aim is to accompany the tabulated results from St Andrews staff, presented alongside aggregated results for all the institutions that participated in CEDARS in 2023 (CEDARS UK) presented in the excel file: 'CEDARS 2023 Tables St Andrews'. Rather than an extensive description of the results, the report aims to focus on particular St Andrews results that are on key topics and/or appear distinctive compared with the aggregate results, and where possible to provide some deeper insights for certain key groups of staff. It is hoped the results will be valuable underpinning evidence for St Andrews as it plans future support for its researchers and provide a baseline against which results from future CEDARS participation by St Andrews can be compared. The structure of the report is somewhat thematic, reflecting the structure of the Concordat and its principles, on which basis the survey questionnaire was designed.

Participation, respondent profile and key groups

Survey response rates and representativeness

Numerically, 69 complete responses were obtained from staff at St Andrews, which comprise the dataset from which the results here are drawn. The modest size of 69 staff population means that the response sample is not large, and this limits some of the analysis. It is too small for fully robust analysis of sub-groups, but we do provide some indicative results by career stage, where substantive differences are apparent. Those differences should be treated with some caution. Overall, it may be useful, therefore, to regard results as being 'reflective' of views of St Andrews staff, rather than being statistically representative of them.

Profile of respondents

In considering St Andrews's results, and any comparisons with the UK aggregate, it is crucial to understand the profile of respondents (and how that could differ from the profile of the UK aggregate). Variances in the profile of respondents, compared with the aggregate profile, in

relation to certain demographics or employment characteristics could contribute to apparent distinctiveness of particular results.

Personal characteristics

In terms of 'personal' demographics, St Andrews aligns with those observed in the UK aggregate data in terms of age and gender. However, a **higher proportion of St Andrew respondents:**

- are **EU member nationals (21%** of St Andrew's respondents compared to 16% of CEDARS UK)
- are **men amongst early career respondents (56%** of St Andrew's respondents compared to 38% of CEDARS UK early career respondents)
- are of **other White background (35%** of St Andrew's respondents compared to 22% of CEDARS UK). The higher percentage of other White background respondents can be partly explained by the higher proportion of EU member nationals in the St Andrew's sample
- there are higher levels of declarations of disability (32%) compared to CEDARS UK (22%).

There are also some differences in how differed subject groups are presented in the sample. Based on REF Panels, there is greater proportions than average in Panel B (STEM) but lower in Panel C (social sciences) than compared to CEDARS UK.

Employment circumstances and experience

While the profile of St Andrews respondents aligns with CEDARS UK in most aspects, there are areas in which the sample differ from the UK aggregate.

- In terms of seniority, **38% respondents identify themselves as 'senior researcher'**, compared with 30% of CEDARS UK
- Of those who are on fixed-term contract **67% are on their first contract** compared to 50% CEDARS UK
- **82% of early career respondents** were on fixed-term contract, compared to 61% of CEDARS UK early career respondents
- **12% of early career respondents were on open-ended** ('permanent') compared to 32% CEDARS early career respondents across the UK. This may be explained by the higher proportion of CEDARS UK early career respondents (28%) on teaching and research contracts, i.e., early career lecturers, compared to St Andrews (6%)
- **82% of early career respondents were on research-only contracts** compare to 65% of CEDARS UK
- **93% of early career respondents were allocated 81%-100%** to research which is above the national figure of 66%, reflecting the higher proportion of research-only early career respondents at St Andrews.

Reflecting the higher percentage of senior staff in the sample compared to the UK aggregate, 64% of respondents have more than ten years of experience in research compared to 49% of CEDARS UK. However, 29% of early career respondents had five or more years of research experience (excluding doctoral research). Although this is below the CEDARS UK level of 44%,

it is a possible cause for concern that this early career cohort contains almost a third of relatively experienced researchers who still identify as early career. 21% of this early career cohort have had more than four fixed-term contracts or extensions.

A number of these employment-related circumstances will influence respondents' views in relation to issues within the CEDARS results, so it is important to have these broad profile characteristics in mind when considering the remainder of this report.

Employment

Recruitment and appointment

Within the St Andrews sample, only 17 respondents had been recruited into their current posts within the last two years. With such a small sample of responses, only a limited amount can be drawn from their perceptions about recruitment and appointment processes. Although 76% agreed that their recruitment, selection and appointment process was fair, this is somewhat below the national figure of 87%. While most respondents (82%) believe that their recruitment process was merit-based, the picture is more complex when it comes to inclusion and transparency in the recruitment process. While around half (53%) of the respondents agreed that the process was inclusive and 59% agreed that the process was transparent, these figures are considerably below what is observed in other UK institutions (81% for inclusion and 80% for transparency). In fact, 29% of respondents did not know whether their recruitment, selection and appointment process were inclusive, whereas a similar proportion of respondents disagreed that it was transparent. These findings contrast with the 90% of managers who indicated that they were either fully confident or confident in using inclusive, equitable and transparent recruitment processes (although numbers are also small).

In terms of induction, St Andrews results are in line with what is observed in other UK institutions. Induction at institution level was offered to most respondents (only 6% stated that they had not been offered such induction) whereas 18% respondents reported that they had not received induction at departmental/faculty/unit level and/or their current role. When it comes to how useful the inductions were perceived, the induction local to respondent's current role was found most beneficial. Again, the results align with the UK aggregate.

Appraisal, promotion and progression

The Concordat states that all eligible researchers should have regular appraisal/review. In terms of appraisals the percentage of having participated within last two years, the St Andrews is in line with the observed in the UK aggregate. That said, the results are more ambivalent in terms of perceived benefits. 58% reported that it had been useful, whereas around 40% of respondents who had appraisal did not find it useful. This is in line with what is observed nationally.

While 79% of those who manage researchers felt confident in conducting appraisals and around 21% fully confident, still 1 in 5 did not feel that they had skills to conduct effective appraisals, in comparison with 1 in 10 for CEDARS UK (and 33% fully confident). Similarly, there were lower

levels of confidence in dealing with poor performance of staff (47%) compared with CEDARS UK (57%); and to some extent providing effective feedback to individual staff (26% fully confident compared with 36% CEDARS UK).

Notably, St Andrews's respondents had lower levels of engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) relating to appraisals and development reviews (42%) than CEDARS UK (67%), possibly reflecting the higher proportion of senior researchers. Not surprisingly, 42% of respondents with managerial responsibilities reported that they would benefit from further training in this area.

When it comes to perceptions about promotion and progression, around half of respondents stated that the promotion pathways and processes are clear, whereas half of respondents noted that they are not. Early career researchers are less likely to agree (29%) while other staff are more likely to agree (59%), fairly similar to CEDARS UK results.

Along similar lines, the perceptions about inclusion in career advancement are not unified with similar differences by career stage. Almost half of (47%) of early career respondents at St Andrews felt that opportunities for career advancement are not equitable, above the CEDARS UK figure of 38%. On the other hand, 33% of other staff did not agree that career advancement opportunities are not equitable, compared with 44% of CEDARS UK other staff.

Similar trends emerge for whether promotions are made on merit, with 24% of early career staff and 59% of other staff agreeing, compared to 33% and 44%, respectively, for CEDARS UK. The 'stronger' result for St Andrews is partly explained by the high proportion of mid-career and senior respondents in the sample. It is worth noting that 41% of early career respondents do not know whether promotions are merit-based.

Recognition and value

Results from St Andrews respondents about recognition and value align with trends in the national aggregate results. Broadly, 42% of respondents felt that they were appropriately recognised for their contributions to their institution; slightly below the national figure of 49%. In terms of core activities of research and teaching, 65% of respondents felt valued for publications and other research outputs while around 58% felt recognised for teaching and lecturing. Similarly to CEDARS UK, around two-fifths of St Andrews respondents felt recognised for their engagement in knowledge transfer activities and public dissemination.

That said, there are areas in which the results for St Andrews are 'weaker' compared to CEDARS UK. Both cases relate to external engagement. 30% of respondents at St Andrews did not feel that their contribution to peer reviewing and grant evaluation was acknowledged (compared to 24%), whereas 16% felt that public and media dissemination were not recognised (compared to 9%). St Andrews stands also out in terms of a higher percentage of respondents (26%) who did not know how their institution valued their contributions to disciplinary, professional or sector bodies. This is above what is observed in other UK institutions (19%).

Management of researchers

Experiences of being managed

Respondents were asked about the support from their immediate manager. Generally the results echo those of CEDARS UK with around two-thirds agreeing to a range of managerial statements. Where results do differ from CEDARS UK is that 42% of mid-career and senior staff disagreed that their immediate manager articulated expectations clearly in terms of role and performance and set expectations that were appropriate to their role, compared to 28% for CEDARS UK. These respondents were also less likely to agree that they were given constructive feedback on their work: 42% compared to for 56% CEDARS UK.

Managing others

Only 19 (28%) of St Andrews respondents identified as formal line managers of staff so the results in this section need to be treated with some caution, especially in comparison with CEDARS UK aggregate results. Compared to CEDARS UK, one trend standing out in St Andrews's results is the somewhat lower percentage of respondents who felt fully confident in their skills in specific management activities. As already noted, this applies to confidence in managing appraisal processes effectively. Similarly, only 26% of St Andrews managers felt fully confident in providing effective feedback to individual staff, below the UK figure of 36% and fully confident in acknowledging good performance is 47% compared to the UK figure of 55%. Dealing with poor performance stands out both in terms of the lower percentage of respondents (47%) who are confident in their skills and the 16% of respondents who are not at all confident. In this regard, the results for St Andrews are clearly below the CEDARS UK results of 57% and 6%, respectively.

Pastoral support

When it comes managing staff health and wellbeing and responding incidents of bullying and harassment, the results for St Andrews are weaker than observed in CEDARS UK. Only 63% of St Andrews respondents are confident in responding issues relate to health and wellbeing, below the UK figure of 82%, with higher percentages of respondents (37%) who were not confident in this area is higher than observed in CEDARS UK (17%). Similarly, when it comes to responding any issues relating to bullying and harassment, although 58% felt confident in their skills in dealing with these issues, the result is below the UK figure of 71%. At the same time, there is a high percentage of respondents (16%) who reported that they did not know how to respond bullying and harassment, compared to 2% of unaware respondents observed in CEDARS UK.

Developing line management capabilities

Generally, respondents who are managers of researchers report much higher levels of participation in training and development across a range of managerial topics that the UK aggregate. 95% of St Andrews managers have undertaken CPD in supervising doctoral

researcher; 84% in recruitment and selection; 79% in research integrity; and 68% leading a research group (between 9 and 29 percentage points above CEDARS UK). They are less likely to have received CPD in conducting appraisals (42%) and mental health and wellbeing (47%) than the UK average (67% and 54%, respectively).

When respondents were asked about areas in which they would like to have more training, managing staff performance (53%) and conducting appraisals/development reviews (42%) were most popular. In both cases, the results for St Andrews are higher compared to CEDARS UK at 39% and 22%, respectively. In addition, 32% of respondents would like to undertake CDP in leadership and 37% in mental health and wellbeing. Both results are in line with what is observed in CEDARS UK.

Professional and career development

Career thinking and support

CEDARS posed questions (to those not already established academics and managing researchers) about their aspirations and expectations for their long-term career. When looking at the career aspirations for St Andrews early career researchers, 69% aspired to have an academic career, consistent with CEDARS UK. However, only 50% expected to achieve this, compared to 64% in CEDARS UK. [Note: numbers are very small.]

Although 90% of respondents in a managerial role were confident in actively supporting their staff in working towards their career aspirations, around 62% of early career respondents felt that their immediate manager supported them towards their career aspirations. Similarly, 75% of early career respondents felt that their managers encouraged them to engage in career development activities. While these results mirror CEDARS UK, mid-career and senior respondents were less likely to agree (42% disagree) that their manager encouraged them to engage in personal and career development activities than in CEDARS UK (30% disagree). Similarly, a slightly higher proportion of St Andrews respondents (60%) did not have a clear career development plan compared to other UK institutions (53%).

While 48% of mid-career and senior respondents had a regular formal career development review with their manager (compared to 40% CEDARS UK), only 31% of early career researchers did so (compared to 38% CEDARS UK). Early career researchers were also less likely (40%) to find their review useful, compared to 79% of CEDARS UK.

Engagement in training and professional development

When it comes to time spent on CDP during the past 12 months, St Andrews results generally align with CEDARS UK, with the largest number of respondents (32%) reporting that they spent between 1-2 days on CDP whereas fewer had spent more or less time on CPD. Only 9% report spending the ten or more days recommended in the Concordat, compared to 13% in CEDARS UK. 65% of early career researchers report spending two or less days on CPD in the previous year (compared to 57% of mid-career and senior researchers).

St Andrews respondents were more likely (62%) to be aware of the support the institution provides for their career and professional development compared to CEDARS UK (54%) and to have discussed their career options with a careers specialist, although this is still low at 16% (19% for early career researchers).

Generally, the range and level of CPD done by St Andrews respondents aligns with CEDARS UK. St Andrews respondents report participating in higher levels of CPD in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) (70%) and interdisciplinary research (42%), compared to 62% and 33%, respectively.

The Concordat proposes that early career researchers, particularly on fixed-term contracts, should have time to develop their research identity and leadership skills. 63% of St Andrews early career respondents agree that they had time to develop their research identity, which was higher than CEDARS UK (49%). They were also more likely (81%) to report that their manager supports them to develop their research identity than CEDARS UK (72%), although this may reflect a higher proportion of research-only staff in this group at St Andrews. The proportion who had time to develop their leadership skills was similar to CEDARS UK at 38%, with 56% disagreeing.

Respondents were asked about CDP they would like to do and reported high levels of interest. Generally, the results for St Andrews do not differ from what is observed in CEDARS UK, with around a half identifying: managing others (62%), project management (52%), leadership (48%), and interdisciplinary research (48%). There are higher levels of interest (50%) from St Andrew respondents in training in mental health and wellbeing than in CEDARS UK (40%), while comparatively less interest in career management training (48% compared to 56% CEDARS UK).

Other developmental experiences

Respondents were asked about their engagement in additional activities related to research, such as commercialisation and public engagement. Broadly, the results for St Andrews align with CEDARS UK. Knowledge exchange (40%) and public engagement (40%) are most common activities in which respondents both at St Andrews and other UK institutions have done. When participants were asked about activities that they are interested in, 64% of respondents would like to engage in public policy development, whereas 56% of respondents were interested in participation in institution policy and decision-making, and to engage in citizen science or co-creation of research with society.

When it comes to activities that respondents are not interested in engaging, there are three areas that stand out clearly in the results for St Andrews compared to CEDARS UK. 70% of respondents were not interested in commercialisation; 52% of respondents had no interest in experience of other employment sectors or 60% in a secondment in another employment sector. Although some of this lack of interest is likely to come from more senior researchers, 63% of early career researchers expressed no interest in commercialisation.

New to CEDARS were questions asking about awareness of current initiatives within the research and innovation system. Around three-quarters of respondents were either actively engaged or

had some interested in all topics, for example, improving the research culture (78%), making research more open (78%), reforming research assessment (61%) and improving levels of research integrity (74%): all slightly higher than CEDARS UK. Consequently, fewer respondents, and less than for CEDARS UK, were unaware of these initiatives.

Environment and culture

Views of the research environment

St Andrews respondents' sense of belonging was similar to CEDARS UK. 74% of respondents felt included in their immediate research group and 55% felt valued at work, with 40% disagreeing. A fifth of respondents strongly disagreed that they felt valued at work, compared to 14% in CEDARS UK. These were most likely to be early career researchers where a quarter strongly disagreed, compared to 10% of CEDARS UK respondents. 65% report a good level of job satisfaction (32% disagreeing), which rises to 76% for early career researchers: both similar to CEDARS UK.

Around half of respondents felt that their institution promotes the importance of good mental health and wellbeing (54%) and their working environment support their wellbeing (51%) which mirrors what we observe in CEDARS UK. However, when we look specifically at early career respondents, 47% agree their institution promotes good mental health and wellbeing, compared to 59% of early career researchers in CEDARS UK. Similarly, while 46% of St Andrews respondents agreed that they were encouraged to take positive action to maintain health and wellbeing, this is lower than in CEDARS UK (53%). This gap widens when looking specifically at early career researchers (38% compared to 60% CEDARS UK). Conversely, mid-career and senior respondents are more likely to disagree (37%) that their manager promotes a good work-life balance, compared to early career researchers (24%) (both slightly higher than CEDARS UK).

One area in which the responses for St Andrews stand out positively is the percentage of respondents (78%) who agreed that their institution promotes the highest standard of research integrity and conduct, above CEDARS UK 69%. Similarly, 60% of St Andrews respondents were familiar with institutional mechanisms to report incidents of research misconduct; above the CEDARS UK figure of 55%.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

73% of St Andrews respondents believe that St Andrews is committed to equality and diversity, whereas 59% of respondents felt that staff are treated fairly, irrespective of any protected characteristics. While the overall results for St Andrews in terms of experiences around equity, diversity and inclusion are in line what we observe in other UK institutions, there are differences between career stages, with early career researchers less likely to agree (53%) than mid-career and senior respondents (62%) and CEDARS UK early career respondents (65%).

When asked about feeling bullied or harassed in the last two years, 31% of mid-career and senior staff reported having felt either bullied or harassed, higher than the 24% of equivalent

respondents for CEDARS UK. However, St Andrews stand out positively when it comes to familiarity with institution's mechanism to report bullying or harassment, with the 28% of respondents who agree strongly with the statement being well above CEDARS UK 15%. The 19% of respondents who have reported incidents of discrimination is correspondingly higher compared to CEDARS UK (9%). The difference is partly explained by a higher proportion of mid-career and senior staff respondents who have done so. one in five of St Andrews mid-career and senior respondents had reported incidents of discrimination, compared with 11% for CEDARS UK.

Overall findings and conclusions

When reading these conclusions, it is important to remember that the small sample size for St Andrews means that they should only be seen as indicative of areas to explore further, perhaps through more qualitative means, such as, focus groups or interviews. While the small sample size does not support robust analysis of subgroups, we have looked at responses at different career stages and there are certain differences that emerge between early career and established staff and when compared to the CEDARS UK results that may merit further exploration.

In terms of the characteristics of the St Andrews sample, there is a higher proportion of senior staff than within CEDARS UK that is likely to explain some of the differences, for example, in engagement and interest in professional development. Furthermore, the cohort of early career researchers are more likely to be male staff on their first research-only fixed-term contract, than the CEDARS UK early career researchers who are a more heterogenous group.

Differences by career stage

The differences relating to career stage revolve around career advancement opportunities, the perceived value of line management and experiences of bullying and harassment. In this regard, early career respondents are more skeptical about career advancement opportunities being equitable and fair at St Andrews compared with early career respondents in CEDARS UK.

At the same time, established staff respondents at St Andrews were more critical about how expectations were articulated and set by their immediate manager. They report higher levels of being either bullied or harassed compared to established staff respondents in CEDARS UK, but this may reflect higher levels of awareness and reporting processes at St Andrews. Nevertheless, this is worthy of further investigation.

Line management capabilities

There is a trend through the results suggesting that line management capability at St Andrews is worthy of further attention. Although half of respondents who manage staff are confident in their skills, the percentage of respondents who are fully confident in their skills is somewhat lower compared to other UK institutions. This comes through in levels of confidence in skills

underpinning performance management, such as, providing effective feedback to individual staff, managing appraisal processes effectively, and acknowledging good performance. It also applies to dealing with issues relating to mental health, wellbeing and bullying and harassment. Interest in improving capabilities comes through, with around half the respondents who manage researchers wanting to do CPD in managing staff performance.

Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing came through as a reoccurring theme. Although the results for St Andrews about promoting the importance of good mental health and providing a working environment supportive of good mental health and wellbeing align with CEDARS UK, a higher proportion of managers were not confident in responding to issues related to health and wellbeing of their staff. At the same time, fewer respondents felt encouraged to take positive action in this area and there were higher levels of interest in more CPD relating to mental health and wellbeing.

Fair and transparent recruitment

Although half of the respondents who were recruited in their post in the last two years agreed that their recruitment process was fair, inclusive and transparent, the results are weaker than what we observe in other UK institutions. In contrast, respondents who currently manage researchers express confidence in their skills and knowledge of inclusive and transparent recruitment processes. These findings suggest that the skills and knowledge of those in managerial roles might not translate into perceptions of inclusive and transparent recruitment in a similar manner as in other UK institutions and worthy of further investigation.

Career progression

Finally, while the number of early career respondents with multiple contract extensions is not high, it still raises concerns about a potential research career trajectory trap. Around a fifth of these respondents have had more than four fixed-term contracts at St Andrews and almost a third have five or more years of postdoctoral research experience. Early career researchers were more likely not to feel valued at work – but to have good levels of job satisfaction. As already noted, early career respondents at St Andrews were already more critical about career advancement opportunities being fair and equitable and few are engaging in regular career development reviews or accessing professional careers advice. Investing time in CPD is generally low across the sector, and even lower at St Andrews. Attention should be paid to minimize the risk of these researchers being too focused, for example, on their research, and not having/taking opportunities to gain relevant and broader experience to increase their career progression opportunities.