Dean of Research and Innovation

Job description

Job Title	Dean of Research and Innovation
Department	Research and Innovation
Responsible To	Deputy Principal Academic and Research
Responsible For	Research Office and Knowledge Exchange, Graduate School
Grade	SPOT (Salary information available on enquiry)
Hours per week	Full time 35hrs per week (flexible working requests, including job-sharing considered).
Location	Inverness or other location within the UHI operating area by agreement

Role overview

The Dean of Research and Innovation is a senior academic leader with university-wide responsibility for leading and delivering the University of the Highlands and Islands' research and innovation strategy. The Dean works in partnership with Academic Partner Principals, Deans, Research Cluster Leads, and professional services to ensure coherent delivery of research and innovation priorities, effective performance management, and a strong, inclusive research culture across the University.

The Dean is the institutional lead and accountable officer for the Research Excellence Framework (REF), with responsibility for the strategic coordination, preparation, and submission of UHI's REF return. This includes leading REF governance and assurance processes, managing engagement with external funders and sector bodies, and stewarding REF outcomes and associated funding to maximise institutional benefit, sustainability, and reputational standing.

The role also leads the development and delivery of UHI's innovation, commercialisation, and knowledge exchange activity, driving interdisciplinary research, regional and place-based innovation, and collaboration with industry, public sector, and third-sector partners. Acting as a visible institutional ambassador, the Dean represents and advocates for UHI nationally and internationally, building strategic partnerships and enhancing the University's research and innovation profile.

In addition, the Dean has institutional responsibility for the effectiveness and performance of the Research Office and the UHI Graduate School, ensuring robust research governance, high-quality postgraduate research provision, researcher development, and professional support services that enable the University's research community to succeed.

Key responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Planning

- Provide University-wide strategic leadership for the development, delivery, and ongoing refinement of UHI's Research and Innovation Strategy, ensuring full alignment with the University's Strategic Plan, national policy, and funding priorities.

- Be accountable for the effective implementation of the Research and Innovation Strategy, including the identification, monitoring, and management of strategic risks and opportunities.

- Lead institutional processes for the review, assurance, and approval of the Research and Innovation Strategy through the University's governance structures, including the Executive and University Court, and represent the University in strategic discussions with funding and regulatory bodies as required.

- Serve as the accountable officer for research and innovation performance, with responsibility for setting, monitoring, analysing, and reporting against institutional KPIs, and for driving improvement where performance falls short of expectations.

- Provide strategic direction and coordination across the academic partnership, working with Academic Partner Principals, Deans, and Research Cluster Leads to ensure alignment of local priorities with institutional research and innovation objectives.

REF (Research Excellence Framework) Leadership

- Act as the institutional lead and accountable officer for the Research Excellence Framework (REF), with university-wide responsibility for the strategic leadership, coordination, and delivery of UHI's REF submission.

- Lead all aspects of REF governance, planning, and assurance, ensuring that UHI's submission is high quality, fully compliant, and delivered in line with national guidance, audit requirements, and timelines.

- Chair the REF Steering Group and direct institutional engagement with Academic Partners, research leaders, and professional services to ensure coherent and consistent REF preparation across the academic partnership.

- Lead engagement with external stakeholders, including the Scottish Funding Council, and REF bodies, and manage all audit, assurance, and post-submission enquiries, ensuring institutional risk is effectively controlled.

- Provide strategic leadership and stewardship of REF outcomes, including the development of proposals for the distribution of Research Excellence Grant (REG) income, aligned with REF performance, institutional priorities, and long-term research sustainability.

Research Environment and Culture

- Be institutionally accountable for the quality, inclusivity, and sustainability of UHI's research environment, ensuring that it supports research excellence, integrity, impact, and researcher development across the academic partnership.

- Provide strategic leadership to foster a positive and inclusive research culture, promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion; responsible research assessment; open research practices; and high standards of professional conduct for staff and postgraduate researchers.

- Through the Research Office and in partnership with Academic Partners, lead the development and effective operation of core research infrastructure and services, including research information systems (e.g. PURE), publications management, open access compliance, and researcher development provision.

- Ensure that the institutional research environment is REF-ready, with clear alignment between environment strategy, people development, research performance, and impact, and that evidence of environment quality is robust, coherent, and audit-ready.

- Provide strategic oversight of initiatives supporting early-career researchers, postgraduate researchers, and interdisciplinary research communities, ensuring that UHI attracts, develops, and retains high-quality researchers.

Research Governance, Ethics, and Integrity

- Be institutionally accountable for UHI's research governance, ethics, and integrity framework, ensuring that all research activity is conducted in accordance with legal, regulatory, funder, and sector requirements, and that institutional risk is effectively managed.

- Provide strategic leadership and assurance for research ethics governance, serving as Deputy Chair of the Research Ethics Committee and ensuring that ethical review processes are robust, proportionate, and consistent across the academic partnership.

- Lead the University's approach to research integrity, trusted researcher requirements, and data security, including oversight of compliance with national and international expectations for sensitive, dual-use, and collaborative research.

- Ensure the preparation, approval, and submission of the University's annual Research Integrity Statement to Court, providing assurance on compliance, culture, and continuous improvement.

- Ensure the preparation, approval, and submission of the Research Assurance and Accountability Report to the Scottish Funding Council, and lead institutional responses to any related scrutiny, audit, or follow-up action.

- Chair key institutional bodies, including the Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee, Research Forum, and Professoriate Group, using these forums to uphold academic standards, strengthen research leadership, and support coherent institutional decision-making.

Innovation, Commercialisation, and Knowledge Exchange

- Provide University-wide strategic leadership for research commercialisation, knowledge exchange, and innovation, ensuring that UHI's activities are aligned with Scotland's Innovation Strategy, regional strengths, and institutional priorities.

- Be accountable for the development, delivery, and evaluation of knowledge exchange and innovation initiatives, including Innovation Vouchers, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, and UHI's engagement with Converge, Interface, and other sector partners.

- Lead the strategic allocation and stewardship of the Knowledge Exchange Innovation Fund, including financial oversight, sector group engagement, and alignment with institutional priorities.

- Act as a visible ambassador for UHI innovation, building partnerships with industry, the public sector, and the wider research community, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurial and interdisciplinary research across the University.

- Drive the strategic integration of research and innovation, ensuring that commercialisation and knowledge exchange contribute to the University's impact, sustainability, and national reputation.

Graduate School and National Representation

- Be institutionally accountable for the effectiveness and strategic direction of the UHI Graduate School, ensuring that research degree provision meets national quality standards, supports postgraduate researcher development, and fosters a high-quality researcher experience across the academic partnership.

- Provide executive leadership in the implementation of policies, processes, and initiatives arising from national forums, including Vitae and Scotland's Graduate Schools, ensuring timely and consistent institutional adoption.

- Act as a visible representative and advocate for UHI at national and international research and postgraduate education bodies, building strategic partnerships, raising the University's profile, and ensuring that UHI's interests are effectively promoted in sector-wide decision-making.

- Support the development and enhancement of interdisciplinary research communities, promoting collaboration, impact, and innovation within the University and across its partner network.

Engagement and Events

- Provide strategic leadership for the University's research and innovation events, ensuring they enhance institutional visibility, foster collaboration, and support interdisciplinary research communities.

- Act as a visible and influential representative of UHI regionally, nationally, and internationally, building strategic partnerships, strengthening the University's research and innovation profile, and championing its research community.

- Lead the planning and execution of high-profile institutional events, including the UHI Research Conference, ensuring that they reflect the University's research ambitions, facilitate knowledge exchange, and support stakeholder engagement.

- Contribute as a senior member of the University's academic and management leadership teams, providing strategic insight and purposeful input to decision-making, policy development, and institutional planning.

Other responsibilities

- Identify, monitor, and manage risks associated with research and innovation activities, ensuring robust mitigation and reporting to relevant governance bodies.

- Participate actively in the University's performance and development review processes, both as a senior leader and as a participant in institutional planning.

- Promote and embed health, safety, sustainability, and climate responsibility across the research environment, contributing to UHI's net-zero, biodiversity, and sustainability objectives.

- Undertake strategically relevant professional development, as required to maintain currency with sector developments, governance, and emerging research and innovation priorities.

- Undertake such other duties commensurate with the grade as may reasonably be required, consistent with the role's institutional remit and seniority.

Date: 29/01/26