

Policy and Procedures for the “Supporting Research Excellence Scheme”

Contact Officer

Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor Research

Purpose

This document sets out the policies and associated procedures that will govern the new “Supporting Research Excellence Scheme”. This scheme allocates time for academic staff (and other staff where appropriate) to engage in a specific programme of research leading to the production of excellent outputs and/or impact which will make a significant contribution to the University’s future submissions to the Research Excellence Framework. It replaces the Research & Project Leave Scheme.

Overview

The Policy is in eight sections:

1. The Strategic Context
2. Staff’s Eligibility for the Scheme
3. Institute Planning
4. Application Process
5. Application Documents
6. Role of the “Supporting Research Excellence” Panel
7. Expectations of Staff who are allocated research time through the scheme
8. End of Scheme Reporting

Scope

The policy applies primarily to academic staff on “teaching and research” contracts but can be extended to staff on “research only” or professional contracts in specific contexts.

The Policy

1. Strategic Context

- 1.1 The University is seeking to build on its success in REF 2014. It was the most improved University (in comparison to the outcomes of RAE 2008) on the measure of “research power”, reflecting not only a significant increase in the quality of its research (X% was adjudged 3* or 4* in REF 2014 compared to x% in RAE 2008) but also a very significant increase in the proportion of staff submitted to the exercise (30% compared to 8%). The University’s ambition is to be among the most improved institutions again in the next REF, increasing further the proportion of staff submitted but also substantially advancing the quality of the research submitted to the exercise.
- 1.2 In order to meet this ambition, the University has rethought its approach to allocating research leave. The “Supporting Research Excellence” scheme will support staff with time and resource to undertake a period of research *only* where it can be shown that this period will enable them to develop high quality research outputs, such as are likely to be rated 2* as a minimum in REF terms, and/or to contribute substantially to an impact case study (e.g. through the development of underpinning research, the generation of impact, the evidencing of impact).
- 1.3 It is expected that Institutes will work with their staff to develop an institute-level plan for the scheme over a rolling 4-year period, identifying which staff should apply and when, utilising information from e.g. appraisal, annual research reports, REF mock exercises. This plan should be reflected in academic planning.

2. Eligibility for the Scheme

- 2.1 Staff on standard academic contracts (that is “teaching and research” contracts) are eligible to undertake a period of research under this scheme once in every 5 academic years. In exceptional circumstances, a case may be made for a staff member to be awarded a second period within this 5-year period.¹
- 2.2 Academic staff in the following categories are not *normally* eligible for the scheme:
 - Staff in their probation period
 - Staff undertaking a higher degree (Masters or Doctorate) with the immediate exception of those enrolled on a PhD by Published or Creative work²
 - Staff on “teaching and research” contracts who are allocated more than 50% of their time for research
- 2.3 Staff on “research only” contracts are *not* normally eligible for the scheme.³
- 2.4 Staff in professional contracts are *not* normally eligible for the scheme.⁴

3. Institute planning

- 3.1 It is expected that Institutes will develop a rolling 4-year plan for the scheme utilising information from a variety of sources but in particular appraisal, annual research reports, REF mock exercises, and REF results.
- 3.2 The plan should identify which staff within the Institute have been selected to apply for the scheme

¹ If it can be shown that the second period is vital to a REF submission at UoA level, e.g. it will enable the development of an impact case study that will enable the submission to be made, then an application might be recommended for support.

² If a case can be made that a requested period is to develop a body of work discrete from the higher degree *and* that there will be no negative impact on the progress of the higher degree, then an application may be accepted.

³ If a case can be made that the period will enable the staff member to develop a body of independent research that would make them eligible for submission to the next REF, then an application may be accepted.

⁴ If a case can be made that the period will enable the staff member to develop a body of research that would make them eligible for submission to the next REF, then an application may be accepted.

- in each of the next four years and should be aligned with REF planning within the institute.
- 3.3 The plan should be reflected in the annual planning process, such that resources needed for replacement teaching or administration are built into planning (and ultimately the Institute budget). Requests for additional costs during periods of research (see section 5.4.3) need not be built in the annual planning process.
- 3.4 The plan should be revised on an annual basis to reflect staff arrivals and departures and new information as it becomes available.
- 3.5 Where a member of staff who has identified an interested in applying has **not** been selected to apply for the scheme at all or for their preferred year/semester, the Head of Institute (or nominated representative) *must* communicate the reasons for this decision as early as possible and certainly no later than when the call for applications is made.

4. Application Process

- 4.1 There will be a call for applications to the scheme in the *following* academic year in September of each year, e.g. for anyone seeking a period of research time in 2017/18, there would be a call in September 2016. The closing date for applications will be in late November.
- 4.2 Staff must complete an application form and submit by the closing date accompanied by a letter of support from his/her Head of Institute (or nominated representative) which confirms that they have been selected to apply. No application can be accepted without this letter of support.
- 4.3 The applications will be reviewed by the “Supporting Research Excellence” Panel in December which will make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor.

5. Application documents

Application Form

5.1 Period of research time

- 5.1.1 The standard period of time is full time for one semester; however, the scheme is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of the research. Therefore, alternative models are welcomed.
- 5.1.2 Possible alternative models include (but are not limited to):
- (a) Part time (0.5 FTE) for two semesters
 - (b) Full time for approximately 5 months spread over two semesters consecutively
 - (c) Full time for approximately 5 months spread over two semesters non-consecutively
- 5.1.3 Where an alternative model is suggested a case must be made based on the needs of the research, the researcher and/or the needs of the Institute.

5.2 Identified activities and outputs during the period of research time

- 5.2.1 Applicants are required to present a clear, coherent and feasible programme or work for the period that demonstrates how the work fits with their wider programme of research and how the work will contribute to their individual REF submission and/or to a REF impact case study in their research area.
- 5.2.2 Eligible activities include (but are not limited to):
- (a) Completing journal articles, book chapters, books⁵ or other outputs from research⁶
 - (b) Additional lab work, data collection, fieldwork or archival research such as will feed into a research output
 - (c) Disseminating papers at conferences where this can be shown to be part of a wider dissemination strategy ultimately leading to publication⁷

⁵ It is expected with monographs, edited volumes/collections and other books that a contract will normally be in place.

⁶ It is recognised that in some subject areas such as art & design, drama & performance, and computer science, outputs may take a variety of forms other than “traditional” publications.

- (d) Developing significant research bids where this can be shown to be part of an overall strategy for developing the applicant's research
 - (e) Generating impact through, for example, dissemination to/engagement with potential research users and beneficiaries, collaborative activities with research users/beneficiaries
 - (f) Collecting "impact" data
- 5.2.3 There must be a clear set of research outputs arising from the period and/or the clear basis for a REF impact case study.
- 5.2.4 For all outputs the following information is required:
- (a) Where it will be published (i.e. actual/target journal or publisher), located, performed or displayed
 - (b) Target date for "submission" (if appropriate)
 - (c) Expected date of publication, performance, display, etc.
- 5.2.5 It is recognised that submission and publication dates may be beyond the period.
- 5.2.6 For impact case studies the following information is required:
- (a) Details of underpinning research, i.e. output information if already published and if not as above in section 4.2.4
 - (b) Details of impact already generated and additional impact to be generated during the and how this will be generated
 - (c) Details of evidence of impact already collected and to be collected during the period
- 5.3 *How the applicant's job will be covered during the period of research time*
- 5.3.1 Applicants are expected to identify all UG and PGT teaching and administrative or other roles that must be covered during their period. This should be established in close collaboration with the Institute.
- 5.3.2 They must then describe how this work will be covered during the period identifying any replacement teaching required but also showing how other existing staff within the institute will cover aspects of their duties.
- 5.4 *Costs associated with the period of research time*
- 5.4.1 The scheme is designed primarily to cover the direct costs of replacement teaching or administration required to cover the period.
- 5.4.2 It is possible to apply for funding to cover additional costs where these can be shown to be central to meeting the *core* objectives of the period. However, it is expected that applicants will seek external funding for these additional costs where possible.
- 5.4.3 Eligible additional costs are as follows:
- (a) Conference costs, i.e. fees, travel and subsistence
 - (b) Publication costs, such as APCs
 - (c) Costs associated with enabling impact
 - (d) Costs associated with data collection, fieldwork, archival work
 - (e) Other costs, such as transcription costs

Letter of support

- 5.5 The letter of support should do the following:
- (a) Identify that the application has been received and reviewed at institute level and is fully supported by the institute
 - (b) Agree to the period of research time as identified in the application
 - (c) Corroborate the applicant's description of how their job will be covered during this period
- 5.6 No application will be taken forward without a letter of support and no application will be considered where the support is not categorical.
- 5.7 If a member of staff feels that they have not been reasonably supported by their institute to make

⁷ It is recognised that in some areas conference proceedings are a standard form of "publication".

an application they should in the first instance contact the Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor Research who will investigate the claim.

- 5.8 If the claim is upheld, the member of staff will be asked to submit an application to the scheme at the next appropriate opportunity.

6. Supporting Research Excellence Panel

- 6.1 The constitution of the panel is as follows:

- Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor Research (Chair)
- Representative from HR
- 2 x REF Institute Strategic Leads
- 2 x Professors

- 6.2 The panel's function is to assess applications against the following criteria:

- (a) Feasibility of the programme of research, i.e. is it a realistic programme within the timescale?
- (b) Clarity of the programme of research, i.e. is it clear what the applicant will be doing and when and how this all fits together?
- (c) Its relationship to the applicant's overall programme of research: will the period of research time ensure they are eligible for submission to the next REF *or* that their individual submission will be improved following the period?
- (d) Quality of the research outputs, in absolute terms are they likely to be 2* or better?
- (e) Quality of any potential impact case study, i.e. is it likely to score 2* or better?
- (f) Requested funding is eligible and where additional costs have been requested there is evidence that alternative forms of funding have been/are being sought.
- (g) The case for how the applicant's role will be covered is convincing and supported by the Institute.

- 6.3 Having assessed the applications the panel can make the following decisions about any application:

- (a) Recommend to the Vice Chancellor for support
- (b) Recommend to the Vice Chancellor for support subject to a satisfactory response to queries from the panel concerning the application
- (c) Not recommend for support.

- 6.4 Appeals against the decision of the Panel can be made to the Pro Vice Chancellor Academic on the following grounds only:

- (a) there were material errors in procedure which impacted on the decision of the panel
- (b) the decision demonstrates factual error on the part of the panel
- (c) there is evidence of bias or prejudice on the part of the panel or of one or more of its members

- 6.5 Appeals should be made in writing to the Pro Vice Chancellor Academic, setting out the specific grounds and the associated evidence.

- 6.6 If an appeal is upheld, the Pro Vice Chancellor Academic may recommend the application is supported or may convene a new Panel to reconsider the application.

- 6.7 In addition, staff may appeal to the Panel if they feel they have been unfairly excluded from making an application to the scheme.

- 6.8 Grounds for such an appeal are as follows:

- (a) the institute did not consider all evidence available when making its decision
- (b) there were material errors in the process by which the decision was made
- (d) the decision demonstrates factual error on the part of the Institute
- (c) there is evidence of bias or prejudice in the Institute's decision

- 6.9 Appeals should be made in writing to the Chair of the Panel, setting out the specific grounds and the associated evidence.

- 6.10 If an appeal is upheld, the Chair will *normally* invite the member of staff to make an to the scheme.

- 7. Expectations of staff who are allocated research time through the scheme**
- 7.1 It is expected that staff will continue to engage in research supervision and research mentoring as a matter of course.
- 7.2 It is also expected that the staff member will engage more broadly with their institutes and the University during the period of research time, e.g. attending institute away days, attending and presenting at relevant research seminars and conferences, unless these activities clearly conflict with the planned programme of research. The level of engagement should be agreed with the Institute.
- 8. End of scheme reporting**
- 8.1 Staff are required to complete a report at the end of the period of research time and a short follow up report 12 months after the end of the period identifying how far they were able to meet their objectives.
- 8.2 These reports will be considered by the relevant Institute and the University Research Committees.
- 8.3 Where a member of staff has significantly fallen short of their objectives, and no reasonable rationale for this is presented, this may impact on any future applications to research support schemes at the University.

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Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Research & Project Leave Scheme
Policy/Policies Superseded by this document	Research & Project Leave Scheme