TWO-YEAR SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT SUMMARY

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

The University of Suffolk successfully gained the HR Excellence in Research Award in June 2017.

This document reviews our progress since then and outlines our vision and the practical actions that demonstrate our continued commitment to supporting and developing our research staff.

The accompanying 2017-2019 Action Plan Review and 2019-2021 Action Plan provide more detail on specific achievements and actions for the future.

Background

Since our independence in 2016, the development of a strong HE culture and the support of staff in the development of their research profiles has been an institutional priority. The University's research strategy is to build our reputation and brand as an innovative, flexible, high-quality provider that has strong roots in its immediate community but with ambitions to achieve national and international research recognition. University of Suffolk has a diverse academic profile, largely vocational in nature. Its academic activities, like many other universities in the sector, can be broadly defined into three categories: providing education, undertaking research and performing business/community engagement and commercial/knowledge-transfer activity.

Our research strategy sets out our aim to provide a strong and vibrant trans-disciplinary research environment for all staff through:

- Increasing the numbers and proportion of staff actively engaged in research.

- Developing the early career researcher scheme further enabling all staff to realise their full potential and ensuring sustainability of research.

- Recognising and rewarding staff accomplishments in research through recognised promotion schemes.

- Supporting staff to apply for targeted sources of funding and developing strategic research partnerships.

Measuring the success of the two-year self-assessment plan:

- We continue to apply HR best practice to all staff.

- The HR Excellence in Research Award Action plan has been a standing item on the Research Management and Research and Enterprise Committee's agendas since the HR Excellence in Research Award was achieved.

- Progress was monitored by meetings of the Research Management Group (comprising of Director of Research, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, School Research Leads, Research Support, Research Development Manager and invited colleagues as appropriate) and the Research and Enterprise Committee (comprising of representatives from Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Director of Research, Deans of Schools, Director of Finance and Planning, Head of Learning Services, Research Support, nominated researchers).

- The two-year review (including 2019-2021 Action Plan) has been completed in consultation with the Director of Research, Director of HR, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor.

- Approved at the following Committees:
  - Research Management Group
  - Research and Enterprise Committee
  - The University Executive
  - Senate

Key challenges

■ The period following the award has seen significant changes in senior staff at the University with responsibility for research excellence. These changes have given us a fresh perspective that led to a shift in priorities and as a result, some of the actions in the 2017-2019 plan have been reviewed and revised.

■ From a research perspective, we are starting with pockets of limited research in all our Schools.

Developments since July 2017

University Research Strategy

The [University of Suffolk Research Strategy](#) outlines how the University of Suffolk, as one of the UK's newest Universities, will establish itself as a unique University, known for its distinctive, impactful and innovative research in its specialist fields by 2023.

Distinctive Research

University of Suffolk vision is to be known for its distinctive, impactful and innovative research in distinctive areas. Reflecting the key disciplines in which we are establishing a national reputation for Higher Education provision, the LEP priority areas and our research trajectory to date, we aim to underpin our distinctive research portfolio focusing on:
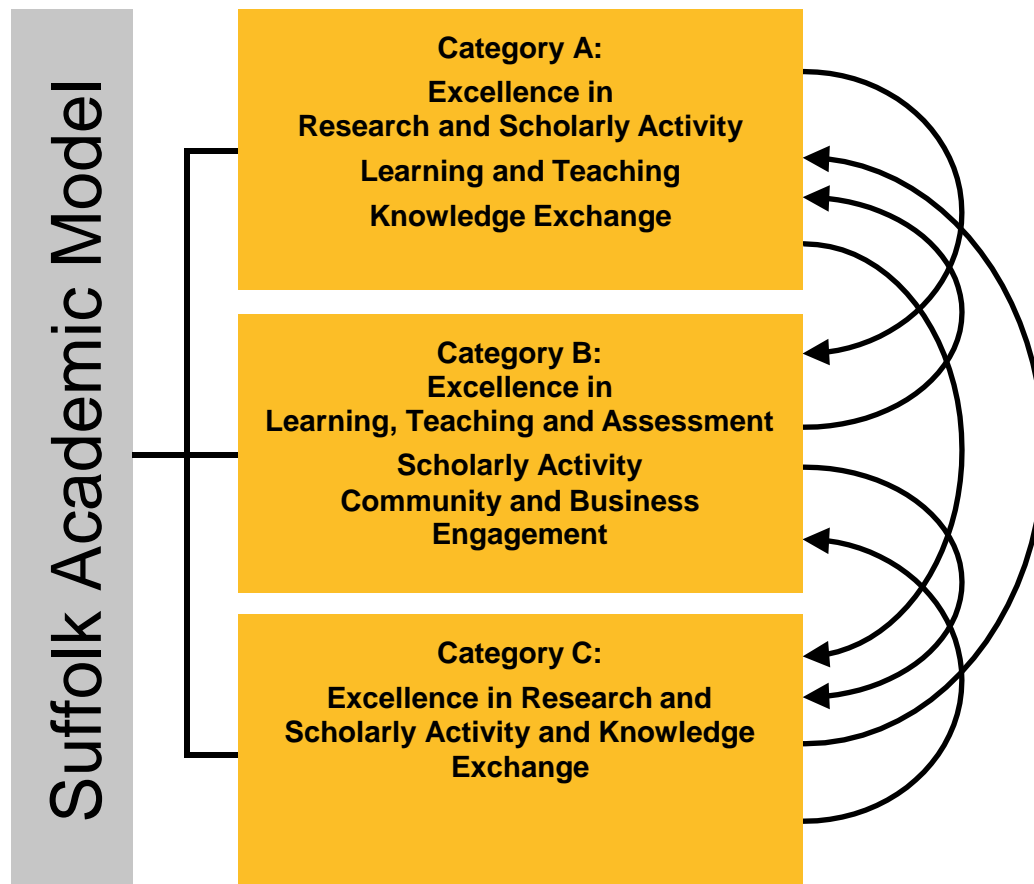
■ Creative and Digital Technologies

■ Crime and Social Justice

■ Health and Wellbeing

■ History and Heritage

■ Pedagogy/Learning and Teaching

■ Sustainability /Energy

Active engagement in scholarship

We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities in line with the University Research Strategy and Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. A comprehensive programme for research training in research methods, ethics and research conduct is in place to support staff in the development of knowledge, understanding and skills related to research, academic scholarship, research supervision and public engagement.

The Suffolk Academic

A model of academic roles was introduced in the University in Autumn 2018, as shown below. The aim of this initiative is to ensure every aspect of the academic role is recognised and valued, to enable better quality discussions at appraisal and to support and facilitate career development at every academic level, which reflects the strategies and priorities of our four academic Schools.

Suffolk Academic Model

Category A:
Excellence in
Research and Scholarly Activity
Learning and Teaching
Knowledge Exchange

Category B:
Excellence in
Learning, Teaching and Assessment
Scholarly Activity
Community and Business Engagement

Category C:
Excellence in Research and Scholarly Activity and Knowledge Exchange

Workload allocation academic model

The University of Suffolk has introduced a workload allocation academic model, which identifies the time allocated to individuals on a range of activities, including research.

Supervisory Team arrangements for early career researchers
The role of the Associate Supervisor

The role of Associate Supervisor is offered to early career members of staff seeking to develop a postgraduate research supervisor profile. Associate Supervisors act in an observational role and receive guidance and mentoring from the wider supervisory team. Associate Supervisors are expected to engage with supervisor training and keep up to date with developments in this area. Associate Supervisors are not expected to undertake any of the duties themselves as that remains the responsibility of the Primary and Secondary supervisor. Online training for new supervisors has been developed as online and face-to-face provision.

Recruitment, development and retention

The University is committed to recruiting, developing and retaining researchers of the highest calibre. Whilst all staff receive a very thorough induction on the full range of services, more could be provided for academic staff (and appropriate support staff) in regard of specific requirements for research. A bespoke Research Induction for Staff programme will be developed for implementation as soon as possible.

Evaluation and monitoring

We collect and encourage feedback from our research staff following events. In order to embed and make this agenda a core activity we have used meetings with school research leads, the Director of Research and research support staff to monitor progress against actions and revise if necessary. We have also included feedback and ideas from researcher networks and staff meetings to inform our ongoing plan (Developing Excellent Researchers: 2019-21 Concordat implementation plan). The use of a transparent mechanism for monitoring and recording local and central engagement with research staff development helped target future events and identify areas where take-up was weaker.

Staff Academic Study and Continuing Professional Development

The University has clearly identified researcher development as a key success factor within the University's research and scholarly activity strategy. The University of Suffolk has an established Staff Academic Study and Continuing Professional Development Policy and we are committed to providing training and development opportunities for all staff, with opportunities to create personalised learning pathways. The training relating to the individual's current or future job requirements at the University is reviewed as part of individual development plans through the usual appraisal process, in line with the Research and Scholarly Activity Strategy; School and University wide objectives and it is captured on our online performance management system.

Equality and Diversity

We actively promote an inclusive culture and strive to ensure that all opportunities for staff development and progression are available to full-time and part-time staff and those who job share. This extends to those staff who are on fixed-term contracts and part-time early career.

Research staff mentoring scheme and the introduction of the School Research Lead role

The Schools have each appointed a School Research Lead as part of the School Executive, who will act as an interface between the domains of School activities, research development and quality assurance of research outputs.

Main duties:

- To support strategic leadership for research activities in the School.

- To work with the Dean of School to support the School in meeting its targets for research outputs.

- To work with the Dean of School to identify priorities for research development and resourcing.

- To support staff in developing high quality research bids, activities and outputs in compliance with robust ethical considerations and funding specifications.

- To ensure research-led teaching is fore-grounded in course delivery by working closely with the School Teaching and Learning lead and course leads in relation to learning and teaching and curriculum development

- To review and develop School based research clusters/groupings/institutes and centres.

- To work closely with the Director of Research and Graduate School in increasing the number of doctoral students and completions in the School.

- To enhance the research environment and culture of the School through collaborating with the Research Development Manager in the arrangement of training events, workshops and seminars and to promote the School's research activities in the University at large and externally.

- To develop national and international links in relation to research and knowledge exchange.

Priority areas for 2019-21 are to:

- Review and develop mentoring provision to enable Early Career Researchers to benefit from support from an appropriately skilled and experienced mentor.

- Develop a reporting structure, which facilitates the embedding of the HR Excellence in Research Award actions within the newly established Schools.

- To grow the PhD research student community and prepare the Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) submission by 2022. We will also work to develop opportunities to maximise our ability to attract top talent through investment in doctoral, post-docs and fellowships.