

TRANSFORMING LIVES: UNIVERSITY OF SUFFOLK STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY 2018 - 2023

Transforming lives
through education,
research,
knowledge exchange,
innovation and
entrepreneurship.



**University
of Suffolk**

CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 3 Embedding research, learning and teaching
- 3 Engaging staff in research and scholarly activity
- 4 Developing our PGR community and achieving RDAP
- 4 Identifying priority research areas
- 5 Transforming lives
- 7 Transformation plan
- 9 Implementation



INTRODUCTION

This 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.

Our Strategy and Vision 2020-2023 states: "We believe that a strong, high-performing university requires a rich research culture generating high-quality outputs and intellectual capital. As a new university, we need to put in place a significant development programme to achieve this goal. By 2030 we will develop a sustainable research portfolio based on our core academic strength that is impactful, practical and innovative."

However, as a small, newly established HEI, we have a number of challenges to overcome and our priorities for transforming research and scholarship, therefore, focus on:

- fostering a strong, sustainable research and scholarly culture
- growing a vibrant PGR community and an application for RDAP by 2024
- increasing income diversification
- having a significant number of staff for our next REF submission in a number of UoAs aligned to our areas of distinctiveness

Embedding
research
learning and
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Engaging staff
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Identifying
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Embedding research, learning and teaching

- Embedding research, learning and teaching will act as a catalyst in driving forward our approach to developing high-quality, research-informed learning and teaching. Our students will learn in a dynamic, thriving research culture that underpins every subject area and which adopts an evidence-based pedagogical approach to learning and improving the student experience.
- The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) emphasises the importance of research — our learning environment will be enriched by highly qualified, scholarly and research-informed staff.
- Research skills are essential for academic success and student employability and we will ensure that they are embedded across all UG and PG provision.

Engaging staff in research and scholarly activity

- Active engagement in scholarship is essential. We are committed to ensuring an inclusive approach to research and equal career opportunities in line with our submission to Athena Swan and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. A comprehensive programme for research training in research methods, ethics and research conduct will develop staff knowledge, understanding and skills related to research, academic scholarship, research supervision and public engagement.
- The Suffolk Academic Model for excellence in Learning, Teaching and Knowledge Exchange; Learning, Teaching and Research and in Research and Knowledge Exchange respects different career paths and priorities. Our approach values, not just discipline-based research, but also research on pedagogic practice to inform and evaluate effective learning, teaching and assessment.
- In compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, our research will be impactful and innovative reflecting the highest standards of ethical rigour and integrity. High quality publications are essential for developing our academic reputation and will be evident in our submission to REF.
- We will raise our research profile through public engagement and dissemination via traditional and virtual media underpinned by the principles from the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research.

Developing our PGR community and achieving RDAP

- We will create a vibrant postgraduate community and make an application for RDAP in 2023. Through our interdisciplinary Graduate School, we will enhance both physical and virtual learning spaces to provide PGRs with a strong foundation in a dynamic, supportive learning environment.
- We will increase the number of full-time PGRs significantly over the next three years in order to achieve 30 PhD completions and submit a Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) application in 2024. We will introduce a focused PGR recruitment plan to attract new students, actively seeking to exploit externally funded PGR opportunities.

Identifying priority research areas

- We will develop a distinctive research profile in an increasingly competitive market by PRAs which draw on our strengths and which will drive our research agenda, learning, teaching and the student experience in those areas.
- We will identify priority local, regional and sector areas for research which reflect the Plan for Growth, the expectations of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and statutory and non-statutory service providers developing a long-term, sustainable collaborative research profile.
- Thus we develop our reputation for excellent research in distinct arenas, become a connected, research-led impactful university which endeavours to solve the pressing problems of our region but also in preventing problems on targeted issues relevant to national and international agendas in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

TRANSFORMING LIVES

Transforming Lives: the University of Suffolk Strategy for Research and Scholarly Activity will:

- ensure that research is integral to learning and teaching
- engage more staff with research and scholarship
- support student employability through a research informed curriculum
- strengthen our research reputation
- enhance the quality of our research outputs
- increase funding through research activity
- develop effective research partnerships and interdisciplinary collaborations in priority areas

An institutional commitment to overcome current barriers to undertaking research is essential to drive forward a distinctive research brand in an ethical, collegiate and sustainable research environment. Academic research and scholarship will underpin the drive towards excellence in learning and teaching across the University to ensure a high-quality student experience with excellent employment outcomes. Furthermore, as a community impact university, our research partnerships with academic, public, private and charitable/voluntary sector organisations will have a clear, measurable and positive impact on the economic, cultural and educational lives of the communities we serve.

In order to align with key regional priorities and develop our distinctive research in line with our curriculum portfolio, we will endeavour to develop our research and scholarly activity in line with the LEP strategy which identifies a number of sectors, ambitions, priority places and themes. We will need to develop strategic partnerships and effectively collaborate with key stakeholders to build a sustainable research reputation in an increasingly competitive market.

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 underpin our distinctive research portfolio with innovations in digital technology initially focusing on:

- Creative Digital Technologies
- Sustainable Energy
- Health and Wellbeing
- Social Justice and Crime
- Excellence in Learning and Teaching
- Heritage and Culture

TRANSFORMATION PLAN

Measuring the success of the transformation plan:

The University of Suffolk collects data on research in separate arenas and an important aspect of the research strategy is to collate and share research data more effectively to establish and monitor success indicators. A more comprehensive, transparent approach to research metrics as measures of KPIs (including staff engagement; funding; publications, etc.) will be introduced to measure progress at School and Institute level and reported to the Research Management Group and Research and Enterprise Committee.

KPI	Success indicators:	2017/18	2022/23
Staff engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase number of staff submitting research bids ■ Enhance staff engagement with research ■ Increase number of staff supervising PGR 	<p>7%</p> <p>43%</p> <p>10 (primary): 14 (secondary)</p>	<p>25%</p> <p>60%</p> <p>70 supervising: 24 (with completions)</p>
Student population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase number of PGR and develop PGR community ■ Achieve 30 PhD completions by 2022/2023 and apply for RDAP in 2024 	24 with 1 completion	120 with 30 completions
Income diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase our income from research 	£490,000	£1,000,000
Student satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Students learn through a research informed curriculum and are taught by research active staff ■ Enhance both the physical and virtual learning environments for PGR 	<p>43% research active staff</p> <p>0% engagement with VLE</p>	<p>60% research active staff</p> <p>100% engagement with VLE</p>

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the strategy

Over the next academic year, as part of the Research and Scholarly Activity strategy implementation, we will:

- develop our strategy for the next REF identifying potential Units of Assessment (UoA), the quality of our outputs and potential impact case studies;
- appoint a new Head of Graduate School to lead our PhD portfolio and help prepare the University for a 2024 RDAP application;
- deliver the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award, the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers including a university-wide mentoring programme for researchers;
- review and evaluate available Current Research Information Systems (CRIS) to develop a proposal for investment for the University in order to meet future REF, UKRI and funders open access requirements; producing research activity and engagement data including PGR to support our submission to RDAP; evidencing impact, knowledge exchange and monitoring of grants and contracts;
- introduce an open and transparent strategy for prioritising and managing the allocation of our mainstream QR funding;
- work with the DVC, Deans of Schools and ADRs to implement the new Suffolk Academic Model and ensure research and scholarly activity is included in all staff appraisals;
- begin to develop our submission to Athena Swan;
- work with the BECE Directorate to create a culture where excellent public engagement with research is better embedded across the University.

Research is fundamental to being a successful university. Our priorities for implementing the strategy will focus on our areas of distinctiveness, developing research informed teaching, growing our research reputation and having an impact on our local, national and academic communities. In doing so we will attract students, attract and retain high-quality staff and increase our income diversification.