



Developing Excellent Researchers: Four year self-assessment report for the HR Excellence in Research Award

The [University of Suffolk](https://www.suffolk.ac.uk/) successfully gained the HR Excellence in Research Award in June 2017 and retained the Award at the 2-year review in 2019. This document reviews our progress since then, outlines our vision and the practical actions that demonstrate our continued commitment to supporting and developing our research staff. The accompanying 2019-2021 Action Plan Review and 2021-2023 New Action Plan provides more detail on specific achievements and actions for the future.

Background

Established as a community impact institution in one of the UK's higher education cold spots, the University of Suffolk (UoS) incorporates the best university traditions, delivering high-quality higher education that's fit for the 21st century of employment and entrepreneurship. In just a few years, we've built a distinctive, thriving academic community with incisive research that's driving positive change across our region. Previously University Campus Suffolk, (a partnership between the universities of East Anglia and Essex), taught-degree awarding powers were granted by the Privy Council in 2015, and the University of Suffolk established the county's first independent university in 2016. Deeply rooted in the region, our strong partnerships with other educational providers is central to our success. UoS, recognised for widening participation, is ranked third in the country by HESA for the proportion of students from low-participation backgrounds – 25% compared to 11% in England. We specifically work with Care Leavers, Young Carers, mature students, BAME students and students with disabilities and our Access and Participation Plan reflects this.

Supported by ten Professional Services Departments, our university comprises:

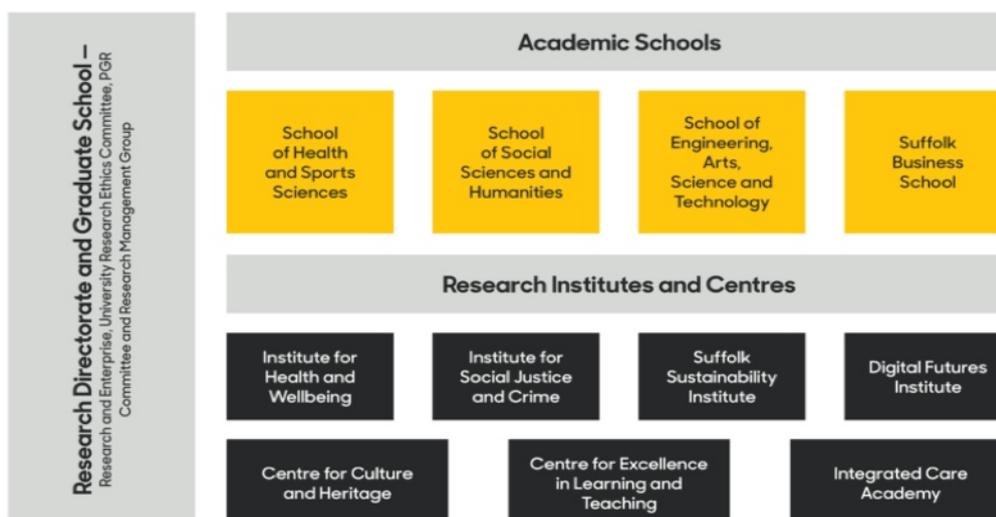
- Four academic schools: [School of Health and Sports Sciences](#); [School of Social Sciences and Humanities](#); [School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology](#) and [Suffolk Business School](#)
- Six pan-university dedicated research institutes and centres: [Institute for Health and Wellbeing](#); [Suffolk Sustainability Institute](#); [Digital Futures Institute](#); [Institute of Social Justice and Crime](#); [Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching](#) and [Centre for Culture and Heritage](#)
- An [Integrated Care Academy](#) (covering health and social care research within a wider remit).

Based in Ipswich, our academic community is composed of:

- 3,500 undergraduate students
- 430 taught post-graduate students
- 70 post-graduate students
- 252 academic staff – 20% of which are research active
- 312 Professional Services Staff

Governed by the Board of Directors, the executive and senior leadership teams make formal decisions, leading our academic and executive [governance structures](#). The [Research Directorate](#) oversees all research and PGR activity.

Academic and Research Structures



The committee structure depicted above oversees the governance arrangements for the HR Excellence in Research award. Monitoring and progress of the action plan for the award is a standing item at both the Research Management Group and the Research and Enterprise Committee which meet three times a year. Representatives from Senior Management sit on the Research and Enterprise committee including the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Chair); the Pro Vice Chancellor Business and Engagement and Entrepreneurship and the Director of Research and School Associate Deans (Research). The evaluation of the previous action plan (2019-2021) was undertaken by the Research Development manager and the Director of Research over the last year, working collaboratively with the School Associate Deans for Research and representatives from the wider academic community including Early Career Researchers [*ECR is defined as someone who is within eight years of their PhD award, or equivalent professional training*]. Researchers were involved in the evaluation process via feedback from the Researcher Development Programme; focus groups; School executives and monthly meetings with the School Associate Deans (Research) and separate monthly meetings with the research dedicated staff.

Substantial investment has radically transformed our research environment. Examples include:

- We have increased the number of research active staff from 11% to 20% (lecturer including ECRs; senior lecturer and associate professors) across our six areas of distinctiveness – Health and Wellbeing; Social Justice and Crime; Digital Futures, Sustainability; Culture and Heritage and Education. We have introduced new research dedicated posts as Research fellow and Senior Research Fellows and have appointed seven new Professors.
- Our income from funded research – over £1.8m in total since 2015 – reflects the diversity of funding sources that we have promptly secured while establishing our research reputation. 62% of our research income was generated from UK Government/local authorities, health, and hospital authorities; 13% from UK based charities; 7% from UK industry; plus 9% from EU Government sources.
- A UK government award of £6mil 2020 launched Suffolk Data Science Academy in the [DigiTech Centre](#) (in partnership with BT). The new centre has access to over £5m of specialist computing infrastructure optimised to the development of artificial intelligence and big data analytics research, with a focus on machine learning application.
- £13m investment including from NALEP, Health Education England, NHS Trusts, and Ipswich Borough Council to build a state-of-the-art Health and Wellbeing.
- [The Hold](#) (opened August 2020) offers an exciting new county archive and research facility on our campus and is a project we've partnered with Suffolk County Council on, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund with significant potential for research and impact.

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

- We continue to apply the core principles of the Concordat best practice to all staff. The values and professional behaviours that define our culture are detailed in our Equality and Diversity Policy and our People Strategy. These include an emphasis on wellbeing, connected leadership, and supporting career development for all our staff.
- We are a Disability Confident Employer and part of the Working Families initiative, with flexible working, flexible retirement and a suite of family-friendly policies and practices.
- Our annual Staff Wellbeing Audit is insightfully supported by Suffolk Mind, and the university provides a comprehensive range of wellbeing resources through Silver Cloud (the leading digital mental health platform).
- We initiated a Workload Allocation Model in 2019 that has distinct workload allocations and a transparent model of backfill for staff with research projects. Also applying to all academic staff, our Support for Staff Academic Study and Continuing Professional Development Policy provides 18 days paid development time. All CAT A are guaranteed at least a day dedicated each week for research, and academics seeking to become CAT A have half a day each week.

- The HR Excellence in Research Award Action plan has been a standing item on the Research Management Committee's 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, Associate Deans for Research, 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, Associate Deans for Research, Associate Deans for Business Engagement, Director of Finance and Planning, Director Learning Services, Research Support, nominated researchers).

The four-year review has been completed in consultation with the Director of Research, Director of People and Organisational Development, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor and approved at the following Committees:

- Research Management Group (RMG)
- Research and Enterprise Committee (REC)
- Senate

Key challenges

- Relatively new institution developing a robust research reputation in an increasingly competitive research environment
- Developing a new community of research dedicated staff in an established teaching environment

Achievements since July 2019

- Increased the proportion of staff with significant responsibility for research to 17% (Principle 1 and Principle 6).
- Grown our PhD provision to over 70 students in 2020, while introducing 20 PhD bursaries (Principle 2 & Principle 6).
- Provided extensive early career researcher support through a comprehensive programme of training and mentoring (Principle 4 & Principle 5).
- Investment in seven professor posts (Principle 1).
- Appointments of Associate Dean for Research in academic schools (Principle 1).
- Introduced Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow role (Principle 1).
- Implementing a Workload Allocation Model to manage dedicated time for research and ensured all our CAT A staff are members of a research institute or centre (Principle 2).
- In collaboration with BT's Tommy Flower Network, established the DigiTech Centre for research, creating new research and teaching labs in Cyber Security, Smart Living and Future Networks by attracting £6.4m external capital funding (Principle 3).
- Established the first UK Integrated Care Academy, with funding from Integrated Care System (Principle 3).
- Developed new, strategic research partnerships with NHS South Norfolk CCG, East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust, the Marie Collins Foundation, Better Policing Collaborative, the UK Safer Internet Centre, Sue Ryder Foundation and Office for Students (Principle 3).
- Developed opportunities to maximise our ability to attract top talent through investment in doctoral, post-docs and fellowships (Principle 1 & Principle 6).
- Developed mentoring provision to enable Early Career Researchers to benefit from support from an appropriately skilled and experienced mentor (Principle 4 & Principle 5).

By 2023 (6-year self-assessment review) we will:

Action	Smart measure
Significantly strengthen our research governance and scholarly culture with new professorial appointments leading research institutes and centres, and new research partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7 New Professorial appointments ■ The establishment of Research Institutes and Centres in our 6 areas of research distinctiveness
Gain membership of UKRIO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We will be members of UKRIO
Obtain HEQR funding, enabling us to engage in long-term strategic planning for research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Receipt of HEQR funding and revised research strategy
Extensively invest in our research environment for workforce planning and workload allocation, to achieve a critical mass of Staff with SRR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduction of WAM and 30% of academic staff with SSR by 2023
Improve resources to support research, including an interdisciplinary research hub, new posts, as well as technology for capturing and recording research activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduction of a new Research Support Manager post ■ Implementation of new technological systems to capture and record research activity
Increase the number of research students significantly over the next three years and to prepare a <u>Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP)</u> application by 2024/2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New position and appointment of Head of Graduate School ■ Increase of research students to 150 by end of 2023. ■ Development of RDAP application
The Research Management Group will continue to monitor monthly, the current and planned provision, ensuring that provision meets the requirements of the Concordat domains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monthly reporting
Continued investment with Vitae in terms of attendance at Hub group meetings, conferences, and engagement with training resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 80% of staff SSR contribute to the delivery of Researcher Development Programme