Research Culture
Strategic Plan 2023-2028
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An abridged version of this document is available as an audio file via https://researchculture.leeds.ac.uk/research-culture-strategy/
Foreword from the Vice-Chancellor and President, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation

The University Strategic Plan – *Universal Values, Global Change: 2020-2030* – sets out an ambition to place Leeds at the heart of a global network, finding innovative solutions to regional, national and global challenges. We can only make this positive difference to the world if our university community works in partnership, with our research and education enriching each other.

Key to delivering this vision is an ambitious, inclusive research culture and environment that will support our staff to achieve their full potential, realising our shared goals.

All members of our community have a role to play in developing and promoting a positive and inclusive research culture. In turn, this enhanced research culture will benefit our entire community: our staff, students, partners, and the communities we serve. It will create an environment that encourages innovation and creativity, where our staff and student community feel empowered to explore unconventional ideas that generate societal impact. It will support values and goals based on ethical behaviour, engendering trust and compassion, creating an environment that nurtures collaboration.

At Leeds, we recognise the critical need for culture change and the many benefits that will be realised by moving swiftly. In 2021 we formalised our efforts to improve research culture, placing Leeds at the heart of the systematic reform needed to empower more staff to produce high-quality research in the right way. Solving the complex problems that face our world requires a concerted community effort. We must collaborate openly across disciplines and sectors, bringing together fundamental and translational researchers with the likes of policy makers, business, and third sector organisations and others to deliver long-lasting change. We must develop, recognise, and reward the many different contributions required to achieve these ambitions.

The Research Excellence Framework’s (REF) recognition of positive research culture and societal impact as central components of research excellence is now established. Our major research funders are shifting towards positive structural and behavioural improvements. At Leeds we are building on this momentum, creating deep, positive change. This research culture strategic plan – forming an overarching strategy for research culture with its action plan - provides an essential framework for embedding initiatives across the institution and for integrating practice that will enhance our environment and wellbeing: it signals a commitment to lifting barriers at all research career stages and for all job roles. We will be open about the challenges that persist and will collaborate in our approach to solving them.

It is the responsibility of all our staff whose roles impact upon research – academic, professional, and technical – to have this vision at the forefront of their minds as we embark on the next five years.

Professor Simone Buitendijk, Vice-Chancellor and President

Professor Nick Plant, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation
What do we mean by research culture?

Research culture describes the environment in which research and innovation happens, and how that environment impacts all those involved. It includes the ways that we collaborate, communicate, and interact with each other; the behaviours, attitudes, and values that shape how our research is developed, conducted, and used; and the mechanisms that recognise and reward our work.

At the University of Leeds, we recognise and value everyone involved in research, across all career stages and paths. Participants in research; our collaborators and external partners; academic, research and technical staff; colleagues in professional services; students, and those in many other roles within the University all make essential contributions. Together we enable, conduct, participate in, and disseminate research.

Like other research institutions, we face significant challenges to our research culture. As acknowledged in our research culture statement, our environment is not as diverse as it should be, and we often define and reward success too narrowly. Our funding mechanisms can be complex and over competitive, our structures can be rigidly hierarchical, and we need to do better at creating a safe and supportive environment that enables colleagues to flag when things are going wrong.

At the University of Leeds, we recognise and value everyone involved in research, across all career stages and paths. Participants in research; our collaborators and external partners; academic, research and technical staff; colleagues in professional services; students, and those in many other roles within the University all make essential contributions. Together we enable, conduct, participate in, and disseminate research.

The University of Leeds is committed to improving its research culture. Our University Strategy provides a blueprint for a values-driven university that harnesses its expertise in research and research-led education to help shape a better future, working collaboratively to tackle inequalities, achieve societal impact, and drive change. Focusing on three core themes – Community, Culture, and Impact – the overarching strategy sets out our ambition to offer a collaborative, supportive, and safe environment for the entire University community and emphasises the importance of teamwork and diversity. To deliver the 10-year strategy, we must achieve an inclusive, equitable, open, and supportive research culture.

“We do research which seeks to improve and save lives - medical, engineering, climate science, etc., and we’re imparting knowledge to the next generation to keep that going. All of us make different and important contributions to keep the University running and make this happen. I’m proud to work for an organisation that does all this”.

Staff member, July 2021
Research culture is changing.
This is our strategic vision for the University’s part in that change

Through collective responsibility, we will create an environment in which everyone can do their most impactful and satisfying research. Leading research can only emerge from a place where colleagues are recognised for their diverse work, where supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion is the norm, where research can be done confidently and openly, and where there is a culture of mutual support.

A positive, collaborative research culture not only provides an enjoyable and sustainable work life, it is also essential for delivering high quality research and research-led education. An environment that supports open academic discovery, while protecting and rewarding those involved, is most likely to lead to robust research. For example, ethnic diversity within a collaborator team strongly correlates with research impact.

An inclusive, open, and supportive research culture will:
- improve the quality, impact, and reach of our research
- inspire researchers to effectively respond to current and future global challenges
- enable researchers to develop their careers in ways that are personally and collectively fulfilling
- deliver research-led education that will train and inspire the next generation of global citizens
- attract and retain the best research teams
- build trust within our organisation
- eliminate harmful research practices, e.g., exclusion, self-interest, wastage.

More instrumentally, as funders and other external stakeholders increasingly require researchers to evidence the behaviours that create a positive research culture, we need to incorporate positive practices into our core ways of working. Major funders such as UKRI and Wellcome are now making funding contingent on evidencing the move towards a healthier local culture, and research culture will constitute 25% of our submission to REF2028. Our community is well-placed to help secure these changes.

Our current research culture poses significant risks – materially, intellectually, and interpersonally. Maintaining hypercompetitive, individualistic, outdated cultures will result in significant negative impacts to the institution. These include retention issues, a plateauing of skill, lack of diversity of our research cohort (negatively associated with the development of novel, disruptive research), reduced competitiveness for external grant funding (with the potential for exclusion from certain schemes/funders), and a decrease in REF result quality.

Although our focus is primarily local, we have far-reaching networks allowing us to influence the wider sector to drive a positive, long-lasting change that will become the norm wherever you work. Our Research Culture Strategy and the outcomes it delivers will ensure that we are at the heart of a global higher education community, and that we uphold our values of inclusion, integrity, collaboration, and compassion.

“Despite our reputation and credentials, we also need to innovate and move with the times. The University specifies a range of pledges e.g., sustainability and equality but it needs to move faster and prioritise these. Rather than be a follower, we could be a leader”.

Staff member, July 2021

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-07634-8
Our strategy is action focused. Here’s how we’ll deliver it.

The overarching aim of our Research Culture Strategy is to enable more University of Leeds (UoL) colleagues to produce leading research inclusively, equitably, openly, and supportively.

We will focus our efforts on four strategic objectives (SO) that have been determined by consultation across our research community; different disciplines, career stages, backgrounds, and job families, via our inclusive research culture cafes, committee discussions, and an in-depth external analysis of a 2021 University-wide survey.

**Strategic Objectives**

**SO1**  
*We will value diverse forms of research activity*

Our research is delivered by many colleagues from inside and outside the University, working on many kinds of activities. To ensure that everyone is appropriately recognised, rewarded, and valued for their contributions, we must expand our traditional definitions of success to include innovative research methods and outputs while continuing to value established approaches. We must diversify funding sources to ensure sustainability, and measure research impacts responsibly.

**SO2**  
*We will embed EDI principles in research practices*

By extending the University’s current commitments to EDI across our institutional research leadership and embedding it across our research lifecycle - from design to recruitment and delivery - we will enable a more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and highly-skilled workforce to produce more representative and robust research.

**SO3**  
*We will enable Open Research practices*

Expressed in our Open Research Statement and through the Knowledge Equity Network, open research practices strive for collaborative working, sharing, and openness throughout the entire research cycle to enable transparency, reproducibility, and the reduction of inequalities whilst maximising the reach of our research. We will ensure that our communities are fully supported, in ways appropriate for their discipline, to work openly and with the highest standards of integrity.

**SO4**  
*We will mutually support and develop research teams*

To ensure that our research teams (broadly defined to include academic collaborators as well as research enablers, e.g., professional services colleagues, librarians, and other technical staff) can fulfil their potential, we must create environments that support professional development. Through our adherence to initiatives including the Researcher Development Concordat and the Technician Commitment, we will facilitate collaboration over competition, researcher wellbeing, open and fair employment practices, and will enable research staff time to engage with professional and career development tailored to their needs.
Strategic Objectives

Figure 1. Our four strategic objectives and example centralised projects, leading to our overarching aim.

SO1 Valuing diverse forms of research activity
e.g., Championing non-standard outputs through research communications, news and marketing

SO2 Embedding EDI principles in research practices
e.g., Allocating promotion support for researchers with protected characteristics underrepresented at senior grades

SO3 Enabling Open Research practices
e.g., Developing the Open Research Hub to share good practice and signpost support across disciplines

SO4 Mutually supporting and developing research teams
e.g., Developing and disseminating guidance on the responsible use of redeployment and short-term contracts

Each objective is linked to several centralised projects led and monitored by the Research Culture Team. Our projects include a mix of quicker wins for momentum and engagement, some slower-burn, longer-term ambitions, and space to respond to unforeseen opportunities. They are designed to enable us to evidence (in diverse and inclusive ways) our efforts, progress, and failures as we proceed.

Centralised projects are exemplified in Fig. 1 and detailed in our action plan (section 5). We will facilitate participation in these projects for colleagues across the University, e.g., through data sharing or other forms of engagement.

To enable more UoL colleagues to produce leading research inclusively, equitably, openly and supportively

Action plan

Our strategic objectives will be delivered through an action plan spanning the five years of the Research Culture Strategy. The action plan consists of several projects to be advanced by the central Research Culture Team and affiliated colleagues, complementing the wider range of work improving our research culture across the University. Progress will be reviewed annually through the Research Culture Steering Group, and next steps planned iteratively. We will also provide biannual progress reports to the Research and Innovation Board. A full implementation plan is available on request.
### Action plan for the Research Culture Strategy 2023-2028

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action number</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Success measures</th>
<th>Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SO1: Valuing diverse forms of research activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>We will survey and track the range of research activities and staff that are celebrated in UoL communications.</td>
<td>Annual report tracking the types of research activities and staff types celebrated at UoL, and highlighting opportunities for diversification</td>
<td>Increased recognition of and confidence in the full range of activities and people involved in research</td>
<td>Increased range of research activities and staff types celebrated in UoL communications</td>
<td>Research Culture Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>We will survey and track colleagues’ perceptions and activities about the research activities and staff that are celebrated at UoL.</td>
<td>Annual report tracking colleagues’ perceptions of the full range of contributions to our research culture</td>
<td>Increased community awareness of the full range of research activities and staff contributing to our research culture</td>
<td>Increased number of staff aware of the incidence and value of diverse research contributions</td>
<td>Research Culture Manager</td>
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<td><strong>SO2: Embedding EDI principles in research practices</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>We will allocate promotion support for researchers with protected characteristics underrepresented at grades 9 and 10.</td>
<td>Piloting and evaluation of targeted promotion programme</td>
<td>Undersupported staff better resourced to apply for research promotion</td>
<td>Researcher engagement with targeted promotion programme</td>
<td>Research EDI Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>We will use pulse surveys to gauge colleagues’ perceptions and experience of EDI aspects of research culture.</td>
<td>To determine and better understand EDI-related barriers to research (e.g., funding gaps, career progression)</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaged in open research</td>
<td>Increased recognition of and value of EDI work as a mechanism to improve research culture</td>
<td>Research EDI Lead</td>
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<td><strong>SO3: Enabling open research practices</strong></td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>We will create an institutional network of DOIs to champion open research and direct colleagues to support.</td>
<td>To identify interventions for overcoming the EDI-related research outputs that can be recorded and deposited.</td>
<td>More effective and bespoke advocacy for discipline-specific open research practices</td>
<td>Development of open research champion network</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>To understand academic research barriers to recording and depositing research outputs.</td>
<td>To increase the proportion of academic research promotions to grades 9 and 10 by colleagues with protected characteristics that have previously been underrepresented.</td>
<td>Increased researcher awareness of OR practices, benefits, and sources of support</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td>To increase awareness of suitable research outputs for recording and depositing, and approaches to addressing gaps in understanding.</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Better recognition of diverse research activities</td>
<td>Appropriate discipline-specific advocacy in schools</td>
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<td>University-wide network of open research champions</td>
<td>Stronger submission in REF2028</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>We will run an annual audit of open research outputs recorded in Symplectic and UoL repositories.</td>
<td>To create a network of open research champions at UoL, to act as conduits of information and advice on the recording and sharing of research outputs that can be recorded and deposited.</td>
<td>More effective and bespoke advocacy for discipline-specific open research practices</td>
<td>Increased understanding of discipline-specific barriers to OR</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td>To gauge the variety of research outputs recorded in University systems (e.g., Symplectic) and deposited in repositories (e.g., White Rose).</td>
<td>Increased researcher awareness of the range of research outputs that can be recorded and deposited</td>
<td>Increased researcher awareness of OR practices, benefits, and sources of support</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td>Openly available database of UoL research outputs recorded in UoL systems and deposited in repositories by all staff.</td>
<td>Increased number of underresearched academic staff applying for research promotion</td>
<td>More effective and bespoke advocacy for discipline-specific open research practices</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td>Increased researcher awareness of the range of research outputs that can be recorded and deposited.</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Better recognition of diverse research activities</td>
<td>Appropriate discipline-specific advocacy in schools</td>
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<td>Increased number of research outputs recorded and deposited annually</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased variety of research outputs recorded and deposited annually</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Increased variety of research outputs recorded and deposited annually</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>We will use pulse surveys to analyse and track awareness of the range of research outputs recorded in UoL and deposited in University systems, and the perceived barriers by discipline.</td>
<td>To improve the variety of research outputs recorded in UoL, and deposited in repositories (e.g., White Rose).</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>More effective and bespoke advocacy for discipline-specific open research practices</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td>To gauge researchers’ awareness of the range of research outputs that are recorded in University systems (e.g., Symplectic) and deposited in repositories (e.g., White Rose).</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td>To increase researchers’ awareness of the range of research outputs that can be recorded and deposited.</td>
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<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>To identify interventions for overcoming barriers to recording and depositing.</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To create a network of open research champions at UoL, to act as conduits of information and advice on the recording and sharing of research outputs that can be recorded and deposited.</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Open Research Coordinator recruited to support the champions</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>We will develop the Open Research Hub, a central location signposting researchers to all local support for open research (e.g., Research IT, Public Engagement, RIS, Library).</td>
<td>To further develop a central information and resource hub to provide open research training and support for researchers using a range of methodologies across disciplines.</td>
<td>Increased researcher awareness of sources of support for open research</td>
<td>Increased awareness and engagement with the OR Hub</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td>To develop researchers’ awareness and use of OR support resources.</td>
<td>Increased researcher awareness of the range of research outputs that can be recorded and deposited.</td>
<td>Increased awareness and engagement with the OR Hub</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td>To increase the number of researchers and deposited across disciplines.</td>
<td>Increased number of researchers engaging in open research</td>
<td>Increased awareness and engagement with the OR Hub</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>We will promote the Open Research Hub as a resource supporting the recording and depositing of the full range of research activities.</td>
<td>To use the OR Hub to provide open research training and support for researchers to record and deposit more of their research activities.</td>
<td>Increased researcher awareness of the range of research outputs that can be recorded and deposited.</td>
<td>Increased awareness and engagement with the OR Hub for depositing and recording</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td>To increase the number and variety of outputs recorded and deposited by researchers.</td>
<td>Increased researcher awareness of what aspects of their research they could record and deposit, how to do this, and where to go for support</td>
<td>Increased awareness and engagement with the OR Hub for depositing and recording</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td>Rich and accessible central resource to signpost researchers to support available for recording and depositing research activities.</td>
<td>Increased confidence in making a wider range of research activities open</td>
<td>Increased awareness and engagement with the OR Hub for depositing and recording</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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<td>Increased range of research activities and staff types celebrated in UoL communications.</td>
<td>Increased range of research activities and staff types celebrated in UoL communications.</td>
<td>Increased awareness and engagement with the OR Hub for depositing and recording</td>
<td>Head of Library Research Services (Open Research)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Action plan for the Research Culture Strategy 2023-2028 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action number</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Success measures</th>
<th>Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>We will analyse the distribution of staff roles named as PI or CoI on research funding applications (via Kristal)</td>
<td>To increase the diversity of staff roles named as PI or CoI on research funding applications</td>
<td>Annual report tracking the distribution of staff roles named as PI and CoI on research funding applications</td>
<td>Increased recognition of the range of staff in PI or CoI roles</td>
<td>Wider variety of staff roles named as PI or CoI on research funding applications</td>
<td>Head of Researcher Development and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>We will analyse the number of researchers by career stage attending and benefiting from OD&amp;PL professional development sessions</td>
<td>To increase participation by researchers in beneficial professional development</td>
<td>Annual report tracking uptake and feedback re OD&amp;PL professional development by researchers at each career stage</td>
<td>Increased numbers of researchers benefiting from researcher development programmes</td>
<td>Increased researcher uptake and benefit from UoL professional development opportunities</td>
<td>Head of Researcher Development and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>We will use pulse surveys to determine: - Numbers of researchers benefiting from professional development - Barriers to researcher engagement in professional development - Line managers’ awareness of professional development provision and expectations</td>
<td>To determine levels of engagement with and benefit of professional development opportunities by researchers across career stages</td>
<td>Annual report tracking researcher engagement with and benefit from professional development opportunities (live and remote)</td>
<td>Increased recognition of the value of professional development, by researchers and line managers</td>
<td>Increase in the number of researchers stating they have engaged with and benefitted from professional development opportunities</td>
<td>Head of Researcher Development and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4a</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>We will analyse the numbers of researchers’ research enablers, as well as research staff on fixed-term contracts, made redundant, on redeployment, and redeployed</td>
<td>To determine use of fixed-term contracts, redundancy, and redeployment for researchers</td>
<td>Annual report tracking use of fixed-term contracts, redundancy, and redeployment</td>
<td>Increased strategic support of researcher destinations</td>
<td>Accurate data on researcher contract types and destinations</td>
<td>Head of Researcher Development and Culture and Research EDI Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4b</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>We will develop and disseminate guidance on responsible use of the redeployment scheme</td>
<td>To decrease employment precariousness and increase researchers, research enablers and research staff retention</td>
<td>Redeployment scheme guidance</td>
<td>Increase in researchers using redeployment to find suitable employment at UoL</td>
<td>Increased researcher and research staff retention</td>
<td>Head of Researcher Development and Culture and Research EDI Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4c</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>We will develop and disseminate guidance for hiring managers on the responsible design and use of short-term contracts</td>
<td>To maximise the mutual benefit of short term contracts</td>
<td>Guidance on the responsible design and use of short-term contracts</td>
<td>Increased awareness of the responsible use of short term contracts</td>
<td>Increased satisfaction of researchers, research enablers and research staff on short term contracts, and their PIs</td>
<td>Head of Researcher Development and Culture and Research EDI Lead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations:**

- CoI (Co-Investigator)
- DoRIs (Directors of Research and Innovation)
- EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)
- IT (Information Technology)
- OD&PL (Organisational Development and Professional Learning)
- OR (Open Research)
- PI (Principal Investigator)
- REF2028 (Research Excellence Framework 2028)
- RIS (Research and Innovation Service)
- SO (Strategic Objective)
- UoL (University of Leeds)
What does the Research Culture Strategy mean for me?

There are many research culture initiatives already under way in Schools, Faculties, and Services (hereafter ‘Units’) that respond to local priorities. We encourage the sharing of best practice within and between Units, and with the Research Culture Team via our events and website. Supporting this devolved approach, our four strategic objectives are designed to accommodate the breadth of projects across the institution.

We expect Units to engage across all four objectives throughout the five-year span of this strategy, with the freedom to set appropriate means of operationalisation. We will support Units in implementing and monitoring change initiatives using guidance, toolkits, and proportionate reporting mechanisms, e.g., structured narrative statements or the analysis of longitudinal data.

Although the strategy is designed to embed positive research culture into business as usual by 2028, maintaining this culture will require longer-term community efforts and monitoring.

This Research Culture Strategy both depends on and benefits the collective workforce. While it is not possible to give an exhaustive list of the responsibilities and outcomes for each broad job type, we set out some indicative examples to the right.

### Job type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job type</th>
<th>Example responsibility</th>
<th>Likely outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Researchers</td>
<td>Engage with training and development in research culture</td>
<td>Embedding research culture values as business as usual for future generations of researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Research Assistants/Associates</td>
<td>Ensure research activities align with appropriate forms of open research</td>
<td>More accessible, robust, and usable research outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic staff with research as part of their contract</td>
<td>Fairly attribute all contributors to research outputs</td>
<td>Better developed and engaged teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services staff</td>
<td>Ensure practices adhere to research culture values, e.g., inclusivity in communications</td>
<td>Better user engagement with services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Technical Professionals</td>
<td>Champion the Technician Commitment</td>
<td>Better visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Faculty leads, e.g., School Executive Groups; Executive Deans; ProDeans for Research &amp; Innovation; Directors of research institutes, e.g., LSSI; LAHRI; Directors of Research and Innovation</td>
<td>Integrate a proportionate, local programme of research culture initiatives to facilitate and evidence change</td>
<td>Increased understanding and buy-in to the Research Culture Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Faculty leads, e.g., School Executive Groups; Executive Deans; ProDeans for Research &amp; Innovation; Directors of research institutes, e.g., LSSI; LAHRI; Directors of Research and Innovation</td>
<td>Actively celebrate positive research culture contributions (e.g., effective mentoring, inclusive research) alongside more traditional forms of success, e.g., grant capture</td>
<td>Stronger position for the preparation of REF2028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management, e.g., Vice-Chancellor; Principal Deputy Vice Chancellor; DVC Research &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>Ensure institution-level decisions align with research culture strategic objectives</td>
<td>A more integrated community that upholds the University values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management, e.g., Vice-Chancellor; Principal Deputy Vice Chancellor; DVC Research &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>Provide sufficient time and resource to enable meaningful action in research culture</td>
<td>Accelerated progress towards a positive research culture</td>
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Implicit in the roles exemplified above, a wider range of staff are accountable for successful delivery of this Research Culture Strategy. These include: the Dean for Research Culture, Dean for Research Quality; Dean of the Doctoral College; Director of the Horizons Institute; Heads of Schools (including Faculty Graduate Schools); Heads of HR and other Services, and Directors within OD&PL.

**Abbreviations:**  
LSSI (Leeds Social Sciences Institute)  
LAHRI (Leeds Arts and Humanities Research Institute)  
OD&PL (Organisational Development and Professional Learning)
Measuring our success

Monitoring and evaluating progress towards our strategic objectives will be essential for keeping us on track over the next five years. However, research and researchers are frequently and heavily evaluated, which negatively impacts research culture. So, we use a responsible approach to monitoring and evaluation, via SCOPE Principles:

1. Evaluate only where necessary, for example where we need to measure change to justify resource (Did it work?), where it supports local monitoring in Units, or where it supports external policy such as the REF People, Culture and Environment statement.
2. Evaluate with the evaluated. Evaluations are co-designed and co-interpreted by the communities being evaluated. We will also prioritise monitoring and evaluation of projects rather than researchers themselves.
3. Draw on evaluation expertise. We apply the same rigour to our evaluations that we apply to our academic research.

We will also exercise caution towards using metrics to incentivise, and always consider alternative ways to motivate, such as by making a practice easy or normative rather than evaluated.

A suite of qualitative and quantitative indicators has been co-created by the Research Culture Strategy Working Group and integrated into the implementation plan (see examples in the action plan, section 5). These indicators will be contextualised to the Units contributing to the measures. Candidate indicators include:

- An increase in the diversity of research activities that are communicated and celebrated.
- An increase in the proportion of academic promotions to Grades 9 and 10 by researchers with protected characteristics that have previously been under-represented, e.g., women, disabled colleagues, and colleagues from minoritised ethnic groups.
- An increase in researchers engaging with open research practices and training.
- An increase in the range of staff profiles included in grant applications (e.g., involvement of experimental officers or those working in research professional services).

Our metrics will inform the University’s key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success in the delivery of its overarching strategy. The Research Culture Strategy is a key component of KPI2 (Sustaining a strong academic reputation) and KPI6 (Providing a healthy, safe and inclusive environment and enriching experience for staff and students). Staff survey data will be the main data source for measuring this KPI.

Our governance groups have responsibility for the success of the strategy and will annually monitor progress against our targets, following the principles outlined above. Aware of the urgent need for this work, the University and its external partners have invested in our research culture. In turn, the University has openly shared its associated activities. If we fail to deliver on the strategy, the major risks are reputational and financial.

“We are often characterised by performance metrics which do not account for our differences. We all have strengths and weaknesses so why not accept that not everyone will be the best at every part of their job, but instead embrace the strengths of the diverse teams. Let people be good at what they do best and support their weaknesses. This will bring more joy to the workplace.”

Staff member, July 2021

2 The SCOPE Framework is a five-stage model of implementing responsible research evaluation principles to design robust evaluations. It was developed by the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) Research Evaluation Group.
A strategy that demonstrates its own values

The Research Culture Strategy is designed to demonstrate the values and behaviours it promotes. This is a living document that can respond to the changing environment and is:

- **Consultative**
  Our strategy emerges directly from our research community, in multi-level consultation and endorsement at each stage of its development. It sets out a shared institutional vision for what a positive research culture should look and feel like. We use feedback from all sections of the community and equally value guidance from champions, co-operators, passengers, and activists.

- **Universal**
  Our strategy depends on collective responsibility. Universal, supported community engagement with the strategy will ensure its objectives are achieved, and will normalise positive research culture behaviours.

- **Multi-level**
  As an intervention for cultural and behavioural change, the strategy is enacted top-down as well as bottom-up. Grassroots initiatives ensure meaningful and concrete action, while policy frameworks ensure accountability and a formal facilitation of change.

- **Monitored in diverse and responsible ways**
  Research culture change requires a fresh and responsible approach to measurement and evaluation (see section 5). The success of our objectives will be monitored collaboratively and evaluated rigorously yet proportionately. To ensure continuous action, accountability, and community buy-in this strategy will be embedded in core internal processes such as financial planning exercises, and will be an important anchor for external processes such as funding applications and the REF.

- **Integrated with the wider strategic context**
  The Research Culture Strategy responds to a powerful mandate for change, gleaned from internal and external stakeholder consultation and higher-level strategies, agreements, concordats, and projects (exemplified in Fig. 2). These intersections provide a platform on which to build, lend helpful infrastructure to facilitate change, and demonstrate that targeted initiatives and resources can have a positive impact.

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**Figure 2. Internal and external strategic context for research culture.**

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<th>Strategic context</th>
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<tr>
<td>University Strategy 2020 - 2030</td>
<td>EDI Strategy 2022</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University R&amp;I Strategy</td>
<td>Athena Swan Charters</td>
<td>Engaged for Impact Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University KPI Project</td>
<td>Technician Commitment</td>
<td>Responsible Metrics Statement &amp; Implementation Plan</td>
</tr>
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<td>Research Transformed</td>
<td>Race Equality Charter</td>
<td>Researcher Integrity Concordat</td>
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<td>REF</td>
<td>Open Research Statement &amp; Concordat</td>
<td>Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)</td>
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<td>Funder Strategies</td>
<td>Knowledge Exchange Concordat</td>
<td>Knowledge Equity Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government R&amp;D People &amp; Culture Strategy</td>
<td>Researcher Development Concordat</td>
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“We need to foster a culture where we are open to ideas, different perspectives and people. The most productive, empowering and effective work I have been involved with at the University has occurred in open, transparent, and positive environments where we have established shared goals. Due to workload pressure, the pace of change, and silo working there are too many instances where progress can be painful.”

Staff member, July 2021
Governance structures to support the strategy and keep us on track

Fig. 3 illustrates the internal governance structures supporting the Research Culture Strategy. Membership of the groups (including Chairs) includes staff from a diversity of roles and career stages, reflecting the breadth of engagement required, from senior leadership outwards.
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who worked to co-produce this strategy and action plan. All content was developed in partnership with the research community through multi-level consultation and endorsement. Collectively, colleagues have reviewed and improved this strategy through many meetings and discussions.

Because improving our research culture is an iterative process, our strategy and action plan will evolve in response to our changing environment. We will continue to involve our community stakeholders and reach out to colleagues through our governance structures and affiliated groups.
Further detail on the University’s research culture activities, funding, governance, and a range of resources can be found at researchculture.leeds.ac.uk

For further information, please contact the Research Culture Team, Research and Innovation Service, researchculture@leeds.ac.uk