

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Meeting 2 / 2019-20

13 November 2019

Agenda item 16

Research and Knowledge Exchange Annual Report 2018-2019

Including annual statement on research integrity

<b>Action Purpose</b>	For Information
<b>History</b>	Verbal reports on research and knowledge exchange progress have been made at all staff meetings, research and knowledge exchange committee, Senate and Board of Governors.
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<b>Date</b>	18/10/19

<p><b>Executive Summary &amp; Key Terms</b></p>	<p>This is a summary report for 2018-19 academic year of research and knowledge exchange activity. A statement of research integrity, a requirement of the Concordat to support research integrity, is incorporated within the report. A summary of the key research and knowledge exchange priorities for 2019-20, aligned to the Marjon Growth Plan are covered.</p> <p><b>Key Terms and links:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❓ Civic university: A true civic university has a clear strategy, rooted in analysis, which explains what, why and how its activity adds up to a civic role.</li> <li>❓ HEBCI: <a href="#">Higher education and business community interaction survey</a></li> <li>❓ HEIF: <a href="#">Higher Education Innovation Funding</a></li> <li>❓ Knowledge exchange: A set of activities, processes and skills that enable close collaboration between universities and partners to deliver commercial, environmental, cultural and societal benefits, opportunities for students and economic growth'</li> <li>❓ KEF: <a href="#">Knowledge Exchange Framework</a></li> <li>❓ PGR: Post-graduate research students covering FHEQ Level 8 and research masters' degrees at Level 7 of the FHEQ</li> <li>❓ RDAP: Research degree awarding powers</li> <li>❓ REF: <a href="#">Research Excellence Framework</a></li> <li>❓ <a href="#">Research England</a>: Research England is a new council within UK Research and Innovation. We oversee UK Research and Innovation's England-only functions in relation to university research and knowledge exchange.</li> <li>❓ Research: A process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared</li> <li>❓ <a href="#">UK Concordat to support the career development of researchers</a></li> <li>❓ UKRI: <a href="#">UK Research and Innovation</a></li> <li>❓ UKRIO: <a href="#">UK Research Integrity Office</a></li> <li>❓ <a href="#">UUK Concordat to support research integrity</a></li> </ul>
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## 1. Overview

The academic year 2018-2019 was a year of significant transition and progress for research and knowledge exchange at Plymouth Marjon University and more broadly across the higher education sector. Externally the final guidelines for REF2021 were published, there was a consultation and expression of intention to proceed with the KEF, consultation on a revised Concordat to support research integrity, publication of an updated Concordat to support the career development of researchers, and more recently a review of the HEBCI survey has been announced. Internally our governance of research and knowledge exchange was adjusted to better reflect our strengths, strategic priorities and the external environment (section 2) and colleagues reported significant successes in research and knowledge exchange thereby supporting the strengthening of our research environment (section 7). Our preparations for our first REF submission intensified which was identified as a strategic intent in the Marjon Growth Plan 2017-2025 (section 3). We continued to refine our approach to ensuring a suitable research environment for our PGR students and quality assurance of research degrees in preparation for a partnership review with University of Chichester and for our submission for RDAP (section 4). Greater emphasis was placed on knowledge exchange and identifying the contribution colleagues make (section 5). In line with our values, research integrity remains important as we strength our research and knowledge exchange and section 6 summarises activities throughout the year. Building on the activity and successes of 2018-2019 next year is a critical year and research and knowledge exchange key priorities for the year ahead are outlined (section 8).

## 2. Governance

Senate has responsibility for considering the development of the academic activities at Marjon. The Research Committee, an associated committee reporting to Senate, has undertaken the substantive responsibility for this activity. During the 2018-2019 academic year the terms of reference, composition and associated groups/panels to the research committee were updated. A key principle underpinning this reconfiguration was to ensure

greater representation of staff from across the Marjon community, in particular, academic colleagues from across discipline areas and career stages. The committee structure now consists of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (Updated) which reports to Senate and has three associated groups; a) Research Ethics Panel (Updated), b) Research Degrees Scrutiny Panel (New) and c) REF2021 Working Group (New). These adjustments allow for clearer evidence and transparency in our ability to assure the quality of research degrees, greater recognition of knowledge exchange and stronger coordination and monitoring of our REF preparations. Additionally, the repositioning allows for a more distributed leadership of research and knowledge exchange thereby reducing the risks associated with being a small university and being ‘one deep’.

### 3. Research Excellence Framework 2021

The first requirements for Marjon to be able to eligible to submit to the REF2021 were achieved during 2018-19. We received confirmation in August that our code of practice submitted was considered by the REF2021 Equality & Diversity Advisory Panel and Research England and was accepted with no amendments. The code of practice, which is now [published on our website](#), identifies how we will fairly and transparently identify academic staff with significant responsibility for research, determining who is an independent researcher and the selection of research outputs for REF2021. We received confirmation from Research England that all eligibility requirements for REF2021 were satisfied in September. Our submission preparation is being operationalised, in line with the approved code of practice, through the REF2021 Working Group, which is meeting monthly.

In terms of progress towards our submission some headlines include;

- a. We are intending to submit to two units of assessment (UoA), UoA23 Education and UoA24 Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism and UoA leads have been confirmed (Professor Tanya Ovenden-Hope UoA23 and Professor Gary Shum UoA24).
- b. The process of identification of staff with significant responsibility for research, as outlined in the code of practice, has been completed and there is a headcount of >30 staff who will be contributing to REF2021.
- c. The outputs by these members of staff have been checked for compliance with

REF2021 open access criteria and the research repository has been kept up to date.

- d. Impact case studies for each UoA have been identified and were supported by an external consultant to develop them and better understand the assessment criteria.

#### 4. Post-Graduate Research/Research Degree Awarding Powers

During 2018-19 we had 16 students completing PGR programmes including a number in the latter stages (year 3) who are in receipt of Mayflower bursaries. The investment made in Mayflower bursaries will start coming to fruition this next 12-18 months. The first Mayflower scholars complete their 3-year bursaries in Feb 2020 and we have 29 PhD completions on record via our former agreement with the University of Exeter (we need 30 for RDAP). In preparation for Chichester partnership accreditation review, RDAP and in response to feedback from the PGR students several significant activities were undertaken in 2018-19 including;

- e. PGR coordinators for three research environments (sport and health, education, business and social sciences) were internally recruited to provide improved coordination and support for applicants and students.
- f. The Research Degree Scrutiny Panel was formed to assure the quality of our PGR provision and build capacity in readiness for RDAP.
- g. A full process review of PGR was completed including process mapping, rewriting all forms/paperwork and the PGR handbook.

Post-graduate research degrees are an area of growth for Marjon and the introduction of the [doctoral loan](#) to fund studies opens this opportunity for applicants to self-fund. We are growing PGR supervision capacity (n=12 staff with successful PhD completions) and currently the theoretical maximum number of PGR students is 60 fte (12 primary supervisors with 5 fte students). Critical to our growth will be ensuring enhancements to the research environment (section 7).

#### 5. Knowledge Exchange

The revision to the research committee and office to include knowledge exchange more

visibly is linked to Marjon values (e.g. humanity), our positioning as a civic university aiming to positively contribute to our region and our significant academic engagement with knowledge exchange aligned to student success and research. A number of external agendas for instance the [UPP report on Civic Universities](#), the [National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement launch of the engage charter](#), the review of the HEBCI survey, launch of KEF and focus on impact in REF2021 align with this emphasis. The full details of the KEF are yet to be announced but the consultation utilised metrics from the HEBCI survey alongside a short provider submission. A consultant (former HEFCE senior staff member) visited us for a development day related to HEBCI survey in July which included representatives from schools & finance. This means we understand the 'rules' and were able to identify a number of activities which have not previously been returned. Alongside the intrinsic value of knowledge exchange there is currently HEIF funding available for HEIs meeting a threshold on certain metrics (last year this was estimated as needing to report income in the region of £2 million for contract research, consultancy, equipment and facilities, intellectual property, regeneration and development, non-credit bearing CPD and knowledge transfer partnerships). Based on this being a 2-year weighted average realistically it is likely to be 2023 before we can realistically expect HEIF funding unless the review adjusts these metrics. The plan is to ensure the next HEBCI submission made in December 2019 reflects all activity as closely as possible and maximises our submission as a building block and a range of awareness raising activities have been undertaken.

## 6. Annual Research Integrity Statement

In 2012 Universities UK published the Concordat to support research integrity which seeks to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. It is a requirement of UKRI and funding bodies that we adopt the Concordat and meet the five commitments contained within the Concordat, although it is recognised the framework must be implemented with due regard to local contexts. The five commitments we have pledged to make are:

- i) Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
- ii) Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

- iii) Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.
- iv) Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
- v) Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing processes regularly and openly.

These commitments and the ambition that the research community is underpinned by rigour respect and responsibility naturally align to our values at Plymouth Marjon University and how we go about all our business and activities. The UKRIO recommended in 2013/14 that institutions develop a research code of practice to strengthen compliance with requirements set out in the Concordat, and Plymouth Marjon established a research ethics policy and research code of conduct. The commitments will be updated in the revised research integrity Concordat when it is published and so the research code of practice will be updated early in 2019 to reflect these adjustments but also to ensure our knowledge exchange activities are conducted in line with the KEF Concordat. Additional to the research code of practice PGR students have guidance in terms of a PGR handbook but also clear linkage to the University of Chichester Code of Practice for PGR provision.

In compliance with the Concordat, Plymouth Marjon University publishes a statement on research integrity on an annual basis. The following statement covers the period from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019 and summarises the University's status relative to the expectations of the Concordat. It outlines some key actions required, activities undertaken and our approach to strengthening our alignment to the commitments expressed within the Concordat.

### **6.1 Commitment 1 We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research**

This commitment is exemplified through our work on ensuring our values of ambition, curiosity, independence and humanity underpin all activities at Marjon. The emphasis on our values is embedded in all aspects of academic review for in probationary

processes, performance and development reviews and as part of academic promotion. Several activities aim to support the research environment (section 7) including a researcher development series to support rigour. The annual teaching, learning and research conference supported colleagues to engage with research ethics including the concepts of informed consent and favourable opinion.

**6.2 Commitment 2 We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.**

Plymouth Marjon University is an active member of external bodies including UKRIO, Guild HE Research and Cathedrals Group Research and Enterprise group which help to ensure we remain up to date in terms of external frameworks. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor has overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Concordat including the oversight of research policies, research governance and ethics, and training and development opportunities provided by the University to its staff and students. The Research Ethics Panel discharges a number of these responsibilities and its terms of reference and membership were updated to reflect external frameworks during 2018-19 and its activities are reported in its annual statement (annex 1). There was wide scale consultation on research ethics and streamlining the ethical review process.

**6.3 Commitment 3 We are committed to supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.**

The publicly accessible web link to our research integrity policies and the named person for receiving allegations of misconduct is not yet in place. This will be rectified early 2019 as the research code of practice and associated policies are updated considering the revised Concordat requirements. Learning, training and mentoring opportunities are operated through activities of the research and knowledge exchange office centrally. Academic staff are managed by directors of school who support a culture of integrity in line with Marjon values. Activities to strengthen our commitment during 2018-19 include the launch of the research development programme that supports an



appropriate research culture.

**6.4 Commitment 4 We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.**

There were no reports of academic misconduct during the reporting period and there are appropriate processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise in the research code of conduct. There was one incident investigated where survey research without ethical review was being promoted, this was resolved following enquiry by more accurately positioning the survey as 'service evaluation'. The challenge of service evaluation work and knowledge exchange more broadly in relation to ethical review is an area to strengthen in revising the research code of practice and associated development activities. Plymouth Marjon University introduced a report and support approach to identify all forms of bullying and harassment and none of the incidents related to research integrity.

**6.5 Commitment 5 We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.**

This commitment has been strengthened by increasing the contribution to and membership of the relevant committees that have oversight of research within Plymouth Marjon university. This annual statement also supports this commitment and will be published on our external website.

## 7. Research and Knowledge Exchange Environment and Successes

During the academic year there was some disruption in wider research environment due to staffing changes and this was reflected in PGR student satisfaction. Nonetheless over the course of the academic year several well attended activities were held at Marjon including brown bag informal seminars, researcher development sessions, academy lectures, inaugural professorial lectures and an annual conference. A new initiative during the year was the launch of writing retreats open to academic staff and PGR students. The writing retreats were attended by 17 academic colleagues and 2 PGR students and the feedback was

incredibly positive themed around productivity, development of a community of practice and being given permission to focus on research. Staff and PGR students also have access to [Vitae](#) which provides a framework and access to researcher development opportunities and access to UEA online modules through a shared GuildHE subscription. The researcher development Concordat was updated and launched in September 2019 and will be important for us to bear in mind in terms of career development of academic colleagues and PGR students.

Academic colleagues were in receipt of several grant awards (as either the lead or co-investigators) which aligned well to our values and ambition to make a difference to the world. Examples include the Erasmus+ Maths for the Millions project which was a 3-year project to help improve numeracy of school children through supporting teacher's confidence and competence and the 3-year Flavour project which was EU Interreg 2 Seas funded which aims to reduce food waste by creating food surplus initiatives while creating job opportunities for people far from the labour market. The health and wellbeing clinics also went from strength to strength combining experiential opportunities for students, improving lives of community participants alongside research and knowledge exchange income/outputs, for instance they were featured in a report commissioned by GuildHE and The Physiological Society which was launched at a Parliamentary reception.

More broadly in terms of knowledge exchange we are collating the data for our HEBCI return but have identified significant levels of public and community engagement across our events (e.g. supporting the Plymouth 10k and half marathon) and broader external stakeholder engagement (e.g. acting as school governors). Several colleagues also contributed to influencing policy and contributing to all-party parliamentary reports for instance linked to education opportunities for rural and isolated communities, entrepreneurial education and sustainability.

In relation to research related outputs, whilst not aligned entirely to reported academic year, the Marjon Research Repository has 94 research related items uploaded in 2018 and 41 research items uploaded so far in 2019 (from a base of 40 outputs in the first REF year of 2014). Several PGR students and academic colleagues also attended National and

International conferences to present their research work, in the case of PGR students this was utilising the development budget made available to them. Finally, we made some key appointments to strengthen our research experience and ability to support PGR students and supervisors with three external professorial appointments (and the DVC) and internally promoted one colleague to associate professor utilising the updated career development procedure, for 1 September 2019.

## 8. Priorities for Research and Knowledge Exchange 2019-2020

### **REF2021**

- a. Individual staff contribution meetings and internal/external assessment of outputs to form the output pool (Oct to Jan)
- b. Exemptions for small units and return of survey of intentions (Dec)
- c. Drafting Institutional (Oct to Nov) and UoA (Jan to Mar) environment statements.
- d. Checking HESA data submission for staff (Dec to July)
- e. Equality impact assessments and staff circumstances consideration (ongoing)

### **PGR/RDAP**

- f. Recruit 5-10 fee-paying PGR students each cycle and 4 bursary students in fields aligned to our areas of research critical mass (start date 1 Feb or 1 Oct).
- g. Introduce a research supervisor forum to support a positive and more consistent PGR student experience and increase capacity (3 meetings per annum).
- h. Successfully respond to the Chichester partnership review ensuring we continue to be accredited to provide PGR programmes. Seek the addition of Business and Social Sciences as an environment area and Professional Doctorates to the agreement. (Dec)
- i. Work on systems to routinely monitor and verify the broader metrics for RDAP (Jul to Aug)

### **Knowledge Exchange**

- j. HEBCI data collection, verification and return (Oct to Dec)

- k. Contribute to HEBCI review as appropriate (Oct to Sep)
- l. Submit to KEF (time frame not yet specified)

**Research Environment**

- m. Update the research strategy to improve alignment to Marjon Growth Plan and the external influences.
- n. Update the research code of conduct and associated policies to align to the revised Concordat and better reflect the range of research and knowledge exchange activities
- o. Ensure a rich research culture with regular brown-bag seminars, researcher development series, academy and professorial lectures and writing retreats in line with researchers needs.