PERSONAL RESEARCH PLAN GUIDANCE

1. St Mary's University allocates a minimum of 4% of staff time to research and scholarship activity. This is to afford all staff the necessary time to engage in research and scholarly activity to ensure they are informed, and updated, of developments in their subject area.

2. Academic staff who wish to be considered for extra time above the 4% allocation for scholarship and research need to complete a three-year Personal Research Plan (PRP). Completion of the form does not guarantee an allocation of research time.

3. The allocation of additional research time is based on the development of a Personal Research Plan (PRP) which should be assessed as part of the appraisal process against research track record and trajectory and agreed between you, your line manager, and the Faculty Associate Dean/Dean/Institute Research Lead. Professors who have been promoted through the research track and Readers/ Associate Professors who have been promoted through the research track are not required to have their PRP formally approved.

4. In the plan, staff will identify their current level of development in each of the five areas below as well as their development and support requirements. They will also be asked to outline specific targets for the future. Allocation of a minimum of 20% of time will be made available to those researchers who have robust plans in three of the five areas listed below, reviewed against research track record and trajectory.[1] Staff who are allocated at least 20% of time for research are identified as having significant responsibility for research as defined by the Research Excellence Framework for 2021.[2]

5. Research objectives should link to the core areas of:

- Research income
- Research outputs
- Impact and partnership engagement
- Professional esteem
- Research leadership

[1] Managers may exercise discretion in requiring three areas of excellence in cases where staff demonstrate outstanding and achievable objectives and activities in one or two of the five areas, reviewed against research track record and trajectory. Staff who are developing their research profile should refer to paragraph 6 for core areas of development.
[2] See REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions, paragraph 141.

Examples of research objectives for researchers who would be allocated 20% research time might include:

- Producing high-quality research outputs, aiming towards internationally excellent and world-leading standard, as internally quality-rated by the Unit of Assessment internal review, as part of an ongoing personal publication strategy. The plan should state the target publication and publisher of each output, as well as the timeline for publication.
- Contributing to applications for funding and securing levels of income generation appropriate to the academic discipline. Potential funders should be identified where possible as well as any hurdles involved in securing funding. A timeline for applications should be developed as far as is possible.
- Contributing to the planning and delivery of research impact and knowledge exchange activities. Potential impact/knowledge exchange should be outlined in the personal research plan as well as the timeline for identifying impact and specific activities required to evidence that impact.
- Collecting research data as part of an ongoing research and personal research and publication strategy.

Developing strategies and plans to develop internal and external collaborations, both within and outside academia.

Their research environment-focused activities might include:

- Professional academic activities e.g. member of peer review boards, editorial boards, participation in learned societies or academic associations
- University/Faculty research committee representation
- Leading a research group
- REF UoA or impact case study lead
- PhD Director of Studies
- Organising and/or contributing to research seminars and conferences
- Mentoring of research staff
- Being an active member of a research centre
- Effective collaboration with extensive external networks

6. The 20% allocation differs from an allocation of time to undertake development as a “Developing” researcher, which will normally be set at 10%. These are staff who the University seeks to nurture and develop as the next generation of lead researchers and while they might be aiming to publish in peer-reviewed journals, they are unlikely to be producing internationally excellent or world-leading research, securing significant external grant funding for projects on which they are Principal Investigator or acting as a Director of Studies for PhD studies. They are likely to be part of a supervisory team for PhD students, organising academic conferences and involved in research centres or research clusters internally and professional societies externally. The aim would be to support these members of staff so that they can achieve future goals which would qualify them for a 20% allocation of workload for research purposes.

7. Developing researchers must agree with their line manager and Faculty Associate Dean/Dean/Institute Research Lead a three-year Personal Research Plan with clear development objectives.

These should link to the core areas of:

- Support income generation from research and knowledge exchange activity
- Research and scholarship outputs
- Impact and partnership engagement
- Developing research environment
- Research skills and knowledge enhancement

Examples of research and scholarship objectives and activities might include:

- Being an active member of a research cluster or centre
- Attendance and/or presentation of research projects/programmes at conferences
- Involvement in a professional body, learned society or academic association
- PhD supervisor
- Contributing to research funding applications
- Participation and/or organisation of seminars and conferences
- Undertaking research-related training
- Engagement with mentor
- Collaboration with external networks

8. It is a formal requirement of the University that Developing researchers, including Early Career Researchers (ECRs), receive mentoring and support so that they may progress to be the next generation of lead researchers (see the Research Mentoring Scheme). The PRP record can be used in mentoring meetings as a document to guide discussion and planning.

9. Staff should update and complete the PRP form taking the following steps:-

- They should review and update, if necessary, the PRP form that was completed the previous year.
- When updating the PRP, changes from the previous year should be highlighted.
- They should provide a self-assessment of where they stand on a scale of 0-5 against the five areas indicated above in paragraphs 5 and 7. An assessment agreed with the line manager and the Associate Dean or equivalent should be noted. Where there is disagreement, this should be also noted (see paragraph 12 for the procedure for appeals about workload allocation in relation to research and scholarship).
- The PRP form should be given to the Associate Dean or equivalent and the appraiser ahead of the meeting with them (it can be revised after the meeting).

10. The Personal Research Plan will be discussed in the Appraisal cycle and agreed with the line manager and Faculty Associate Dean/Dean/Institute Research Lead. It should be a forward-looking three-year plan setting SMART objectives i.e. objectives which are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely. They should feed into the appraisal goals and be discussed and reviewed at annual appraisal. The PRP requires the approval of the Faculty Associate Dean/Dean/Institute Research Lead and the Line Manager. This should be recorded both on the PRP and the appraisal form. A copy of both forms should be kept by the staff member, the line manager and Human Resources.

11. Where a member of staff disagrees with their workload allocation for the PRP, they should discuss this with their line manager in the first instance. If disagreements are unresolved, staff should raise the matter with the Faculty Dean or Institute Director who should consult with the Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise (or equivalent). Where the disagreement concerns a decision which affects the member of staff's eligibility for submission to the REF (i.e. being identified as having significant responsibility for research or as being an independent researcher), they should consult the St Mary's REF 2021 Code of Practice[3] and follow the appeals process set out in part 2 of that document.

12. Where a member of staff, who has significant responsibility for research, considers there may have been individual circumstances which have had a significant impact on their ability to produce research as agreed in the PRP, they can make this known through filling out a Declaration of Individual Circumstances form. Details of the process can be found in part 4 of St Mary's REF 2021 Code of Practice.

Relevant individual circumstances include:

- Qualifying as an early career researcher (set out in paragraphs 148 and 149 of the REF Guidance on Submissions).
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector.
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave.
- Circumstances with an equivalent effect to absences:
    - Disability (as defined in Appendix 6)
    - Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions
    - Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare
    - Gender reassignment

13. Additional time can be given to members of staff if time is bought out using a research or knowledge exchange grant. It the time bought out clearly represents research rather than scholarship or knowledge-exchange activity, this would then be considered significant responsibility for research if the threshold of 20% is reached. This will be considered on a case by case basis by the Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise or equivalent together with the Dean of Research.

[3] The Code is pending approval by Research England and the Equality and Diversity Panel and may be subject to change. It is available on staffnet.