

Academic Careers Framework



Academic Careers Framework

This Academic Careers Framework is designed to support our ambition of academic excellence, and to enable colleagues to be the best they can be in whatever academic career path they pursue at the University of Reading.

Whether colleagues deliver teaching and research in equal measure, specialise in external engagement or professional practice, focus on research, or on teaching and scholarship, the framework is designed for colleagues and line managers to ensure that personal contributions are valued and measured consistently across the University, support the University's objectives, and reflect our values. It aims to provide clarity about the type and level of expectations at different career stages with respect to teaching, research, and citizenship and leadership, enabling colleagues to plan and build their individual career paths, and assisting line managers with supporting their development, and where necessary with managing performance.

The Framework has been developed to support our institutional strategy and priorities, providing an overview of what being an academic member of staff at the University of Reading is about. It aligns with the expectations and criteria expressed in other relevant University processes and policies, such as academic probation, the personal titles process, and professorial review. It also draws on and reflects the values and principles that govern how we work together as a University Community – the 3Rs of Resourceful, Respectful, and Responsible, and the University's Values for Working Together and Professional Behaviours, which set out how we can all most productively work together.

The Academic Careers Framework is designed to be used in a number of ways to support the strategic objectives of the University, and to help plan and support career development and recognise achievements. It should be used together with the contextual statements developed by Schools, which set out the typical expectations for academic staff in the specific disciplinary context, and include relevant benchmarked metrics to inform discussions. It can be used to support staff development and staff-related decisions at any career stage:

- **Recruitment:** The Framework can be used to inform job descriptions, person specifications, and shortlisting and hiring criteria.
- **Probation:** The Framework can be used to inform appropriate probation objectives, and provide clarity on the expectations for probation and further progression.
- **PDRs:** The Framework can be used to agree appropriate objectives and priorities for development for academic staff; and for colleagues to measure their progress against the expectations for their current grade and for promotion to the next personal title, or professorial zone.
- **Personal Titles:** The Academic Careers Framework does not replace the Personal Titles criteria, but the expectations it outlines align with them. It can thus be used by line managers and academic staff to assess progress against the personal titles criteria, and assist with career planning and development, and building a case for promotion.
- **Performance Management:** The Academic Careers Framework can be used to identify areas of underperformance, and to develop and agree objectives and priorities between academics and their line managers to address it.

For each level of Academic role, expectations with regard to Education, Research, and Citizenship and Leadership are organised under three headings. The first, **Achieving**, indicates the standard expected for the relevant activities, with the balance of these activities informed by contract type and career path. At Lecturer level, these standards align with Probationary expectations, and at Associate Professor and Professorial level they align with the relevant Personal Titles criteria. For a Professor in Zone 2 and above, “achieving” would not meet the expectations that come with their academic seniority.

The second and third headings, **Excelling** and **Leading**, reflect different aspects of performance and contributions that go beyond the minimum expectations, and indicate development towards the next Grade (or Professorial Zone). While **Excelling** reflects individual performance, Leading reflects the

wider contributions to the Department/School, University, or Discipline. For the Citizenship and Leadership expectations, where individual excellence and wider contribution are inherently linked, we have therefore merged the two into one. The scope of activities and examples listed under each area are deliberately broad, in recognition of the breadth of work that can be undertaken by staff across a large and complex institution. The activities listed are not exhaustive but illustrative; and no individual should expect to be able to meet all of the criteria itemised. In considering the framework, staff should have regard to the context of their discipline(s). Where evidence of national or international collaboration is suggested, staff should also have regard to discipline context. There is no assumption that international collaboration is inherently more significant than one undertaken with national partners.

Achieving

Achieving: constitutes the normal level of expectations for the relevant Grade and contract type.

As colleagues progress to more senior academic grades, we recognise that career paths will differ and that this will be reflected of the mix of education and research criteria that they meet.

Excelling

Excelling: reflects individual performance, at a level above normal expectations for the relevant grade.

Leading

Leading: reflects the wider contributions to the Department/School, University, or Discipline – at a level above normal expectations.

Education

“Our approach is one which puts community at its heart. We envisage a supportive community as a basis for challenging students to achieve their full potential, and for this potential to be realised in ways that make a positive social impact.”

As a university, our educational purpose is to foster a community of learning in which staff and students work together to develop knowledge, ideas, and skills that serve the needs of wider society.

Excellence in teaching is central to such a purpose, where teaching is understood to encompass a broad range of educational activities and experiences. At the University of Reading our approach to teaching excellence is reflected in our core educational priority areas:

To be a genuinely caring and inclusive community of learning

We take it as self-evident that learning requires openness to new ideas and to different ways of thinking about and experiencing the world. We aspire to create an environment that respects and supports the needs of individual learners from all backgrounds and in doing so enriches the wider collective student experience. For us, a diverse and inclusive learning community is at the very core of what it means to be a university.

To provide an excellent learning experience

We strive for excellence in the quality of our teaching, in the level of students’ engagement with their learning, and in the quality of work our students produce. Learning opportunities, assessment and feedback are carefully designed to provide the scaffolding that students need to be challenged and supported achieve their full potential.

To ensure that learning is impactful

We support our students to get the maximum impact from their studies, to benefit from their learning in a way that advances their future professional careers. Impactful learning also benefits wider society. We work with employer organisations to address local skills gaps and equip graduates with the tools to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing our societies relating to sustainability, diversity and inequality.

We are committed not just to achieving excellence in terms of student experience and outcomes – but to ensuring that the benefits of higher education are available equally to all students, irrespective of their background.

Lecturer

Lecturers make an essential contribution to our educational community through the design and/or delivery of module and programme content; through the assessment of, and constructive feedback upon, student learning; and through the provision of supportive advice and guidance to academic tutees. Lecturers will hold, or will be actively working towards, Fellowship of Advance HE.

Achieving

- Able to evidence effective delivery of teaching, including provision of timely and supportive feedback to students.
- Demonstrates effective contribution to the organisation and management of modules / programmes.
- Reliable and responsive as an academic tutor, offering helpful academic advice and signposting students to alternative support where needed.
- Evidence of effective design of learning outcomes, and approaches to delivering and assessing these, at module level.
- Able to demonstrate awareness of University policies and strategic initiatives (e.g. relating to the Curriculum Framework, EDI, continuation, completion, progression) and how teaching practice supports these.
- Able to demonstrate awareness of current pedagogical good practice within their discipline, and how this informs teaching practice.

Excelling

- Track record of innovative and engaging teaching practice that supports student learning.
- Recognition of exemplary teaching and assessment practice by colleagues and students.
- Proactive and sensitive as an academic tutor / module convenor / programme director.
- Innovative and creative use of new technologies and/or pedagogies in teaching and assessment.
- Evidence of successful collaboration with students or other stakeholders in curriculum development – e.g. in creating a more inclusive curricula.
- Evidence of developing / publishing innovative pedagogical practice / research, and disseminating through sector-wide disciplinary networks.
- Effective performance in a relevant departmental leadership role (e.g. Director of Academic Tutoring, Employability Lead, EDI Lead).

Leading

- Contributing to the development of a strong educational culture at School or University level.
- Evidence of role modelling excellent practice to colleagues in relation to teaching, assessment or student support.
- Effective leadership of programme or module teams.
- Effective contribution to advancing University strategic initiatives, e.g. through institutional T&L Committees, working groups or Communities of Practice.
- Innovative contributions to curriculum design at programme level.
- Able to demonstrate effective co-ordination of strategic teaching and learning initiatives at departmental level.



Associate Professor

An Associate Professor will contribute to the leadership of our educational community, typically at School or Departmental level. This may involve the development or dissemination of innovative practice in teaching, assessment or student support. It may be evidenced by effective and impactful performance in formal leadership roles such as Director of Teaching and Learning or Director of Academic Tutoring. Associate Professors are likely to be emerging as influential figures within the University T&L community, and/or within disciplinary networks that extend beyond the University.

Achieving

- Track record of innovative and engaging teaching practice that supports student learning.
- Evidence of role modelling excellent practice to colleagues in relation to teaching, assessment or student support.
- Effective performance in a relevant academic leadership role (e.g. Director of Academic Tutoring, Employability Lead, EDI Lead).
- Effective contribution to advancing University strategic initiatives, e.g. through institutional T&L Committees, working groups or Communities of Practice.
- Innovative contributions to curriculum design at programme level.
- Evidence of widely sharing / disseminating innovative pedagogical practice and/or research through sector-wide disciplinary networks.
- Effective leadership of programme or module teams.

Excelling

- Recognised for outstanding contribution to practices of teaching, assessment or student support by colleagues and/or students across the institution.
- Evidence of outstanding support for the development of professional practice skills among students.
- Evidence of national-level recognition for contribution to pedagogic practice and/or publication of influential research within the discipline.
- An influential voice in debates about teaching practice at institutional level.

Leading

- Evidence of influencing teaching practices and behaviours in ways that make a positive impact on student experience or outcomes at subject level.
- Track record of successfully streamlining and enhancing programme portfolios at a School or institutional level in response to the evolving external environment.
- Successful in leading the implementation of University strategic projects or initiatives at subject level.
- Developing and leading educational collaborations with partner institutions.



Professor

Professorial colleagues will be influential educational leaders: either at a national level within the context of their subject discipline; and/or at a University level as drivers of institution-wide educational innovation. They will be key figures within the University's T&L community, both through their leadership of strategic educational initiatives, and by supportively mentoring colleagues at an earlier career stage. It is expected that they would hold Senior Fellowship of Advance HE.

Achieving

- Recognised for outstanding contribution to teaching practice by colleagues and/or students across the institution and beyond.
- Evidence of influencing teaching practices and behaviours in ways that make a positive impact on student outcomes at subject level.
- Track record of successfully managing and enhancing programme portfolios at an institutional level in response to the evolving external environment.
- An influential voice in debates about teaching practice at institutional level.
- Evidence of national-level recognition for sustained contributions to pedagogic practice and/or publication of influential research within the discipline.
- Successful in leading the dissemination and implementation of innovations in teaching, assessment or student support at institutional level.

Excelling

- Recognised for outstanding and sustained contribution to teaching practice at a national or international level.
- Evidence of successful leadership of educational initiatives, projects or committees at a national level.
- Evidence of national or international-level leadership in pedagogic research within the discipline.
- An influential voice in debates about educational innovation at national or international level.

Leading

- Evidence of positively influencing teaching practices to the benefit of student experience / outcomes at an institutional or national level.
- Successful in leading the dissemination and implementation of innovations in teaching, assessment or student support at institutional or national level.
- Effective leadership of national bodies shaping policy or practice in teaching, assessment or student experience.

Research

We want the University of Reading to be recognised for excellent research that changes our understanding of the world past, present and future; that promotes innovation; and that tackles current and future challenges facing societies through innovative engagement and impact. To that end, we will support an environment and culture that enables excellent research and will make best use of our resources, our strengths, our location and our partnerships at local, national and global levels.

Our Research and Innovation Strategy outlines five interconnected objectives that guide our work.

- Strengthen the quality of our research by building individual and collective research leadership.
- Strengthen the impact of our research locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Enhance collaborations across disciplinary, geographic and professional borders.
- Conduct research ethically, and with integrity and transparency.
- Sustainably resource research activities and the development of our research infrastructure.

We define research as all activities that create, share, and apply new knowledge. It encompasses a broad range of activities: the process of generating knowledge with openness and in accordance with the highest standards of integrity; disseminating knowledge and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and audiences; contributing to the vitality and development of your disciplines; developing collaborations across disciplines and with partners outside academia; generating impact and commercialising the results of research; developing future generations of researchers through the supervision of doctoral students and the mentoring and development of early career researchers; and supporting an inclusive, and open research environment. While we recognise and expect that not everyone involved in research will contribute consistently to all these different aspects of research, they are all part of a healthy and vibrant research environment, and part of our research expectations.

We expect that all T&R and RI colleagues engage in efforts to develop strong applications for research funding, and as they progress develop a track record of successful applications, to sustain research excellence across all academic disciplines.

The University of Reading is committed to conducting research sustainably, and to responsibly using metrics when assessing research, reflected in our Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics, and in line with the Leiden Principles. The value and contribution of research activities and outcomes should therefore not be assessed only in terms of volume, but also by their quality and impact, their influence on the discipline and beyond, including on the next generation of researchers.



Lecturer

A lecturer will have established themselves as an independent researcher able to produce internationally excellent research outputs, making original and significant contributions to their subject area. They conduct research with integrity and where possible in line with the University's open research commitments. They will develop academic and professional networks on the basis of their research, and develop funding strategies to ensure the sustainability of their research programme.

Achieving

- Conduct independent and original research that changes our understanding of the world past, present and future; promotes innovation; and tackles current and future challenges facing societies.
- Produce research outputs of excellent quality, based on original research, and publish or exhibit them in general or specialist outlets, medias, or fora in line with disciplinary and funding requirements.
- Develop a strategy for and track record of developing and submitting competitive external funding applications (including in collaboration with colleagues at Reading and elsewhere) to support excellent and independent research activity; and appropriately manage awards.
- Able to show awareness of the University's strategic priorities for research, and how their work contributes to these.
- Use research to develop engagement with the public and end users, with the aim of generating social, economic, political, or cultural impact.
- Engage with the wider research community, e.g. through conferences, advisory boards, contributions to peer review, and learned societies and subject associations.
- Contribute to the training and development of PhD students, and support them towards the successful completion of their PhD project.

Excelling

- Developing track record of internationally excellent research outputs.
- Successful grant applications as PI or Co-I; of fellowship applications, or applications for funding for conference attendance, visiting fellowships, residencies, or facilities time.
- Invitations to national and international conferences, membership of national and international research networks; invitations to give public lectures.
- Successful supervision of PhDs to completion, external examination of PhDs.
- Sustained research-based engagement with stakeholders or the public.

Leading

- Participation in peer review processes for research funders.
- Contribution to development of a strong research culture at research division or school level.
- Membership of research related committees of research funders or learned societies.
- Leadership of research groups.

Associate Professor

An Associate Professor will have established themselves making a distinctive and substantial contribution to their field of research, demonstrated by a sustained track record of internationally excellent research outputs, and a track record of actively pursuing funding to support their research. They conduct research with integrity and observe the University's open research commitments. They will have developed professional networks inside and outside academia and are supporting the development of researchers through doctoral supervision and mentoring of PDRAs and other early career researchers, as appropriate for their discipline or subject area.

Achieving

- Conduct independent and original research that changes our understanding of the world past, present and future; promotes innovation; and tackles current and future challenges facing societies.
- Produce research outputs of excellent quality, based on original research, and publish or exhibit them in general or specialist outlets, medias, or fora in line with disciplinary and funding requirements.
- Engage in activities generating high quality social, economic, political, and/or cultural impact from research
- Clear research funding strategy, and a track record of securing research funding; and of effective management of research awards.
- Contribution to research leadership and delivery of the research strategies of the University, School, and Research Division.
- Engagement with the wider research community at an appropriate level, e.g. through conferences, advisory boards, contributions to peer review, and learned societies and subject associations.
- Contribute to the training and development of PhD students including through recruitment, securing funding, mentoring, and formal supervision; and support them towards the successful completion of their PhD project.

Excelling

- Sustained record of excellent research outputs.
- Evidence of positive engagement with principles and practice of open research.
- Track record of successful applications for large-scale research funding, fellowships, or time at national facilities to support activities generally considered essential to sustain excellent research, or to develop interdisciplinary projects or networks.
- Sustained activities essential to developing social, economic, political, or cultural impact from research – with evidence of a positive effect.
- Successful PhD supervision to completion; or of successful development of PDRAs and research staff.

Leading

- Effective leadership of interdisciplinary research clusters, centres or major research groups (internal and external)
- Active and significant contribution to the strategic development of research and research practice at the University of Reading
- Leadership of activities that substantially strengthen the external visibility and reputation of the University of Reading's research; e.g. through organising conferences and seminars, public engagement, dissemination of research, or membership of editorial boards and review panels; or leading national and international research networks.

Professor

A Professor will demonstrate an outstanding and sustained contribution to their discipline or area of knowledge, shaping the development of research in their field through internationally excellent research outputs. They have demonstrated their ability to sustain their own research (and if appropriate for their discipline their research group), and conduct research with integrity and observe the University's open research commitments. They have developed professional networks inside and outside academia and on the basis of their research; and actively contribute to research leadership in the University and their discipline. They support the development of researchers through doctoral supervision, mentoring of PDRAs and other colleagues who are at earlier stages of their careers, and by raising research grant and studentship funding.

Achieving

- Conduct independent and original research that changes our understanding of the world past, present and future; promotes innovation; and tackles current and future challenges facing societies.
- Produce research outputs of excellent quality, based on original research, and publish or exhibit them in general or specialist outlets or medias, in line with disciplinary and funding requirements.
- Develop research funding strategies for research groups and lead successful grant funding bids appropriate for the disciplinary context; including organising and managing bids across the University of Reading.
- Engagement with the wider research community at an appropriate level, e.g. through conferences, advisory boards, funding panels, and learned societies and subject associations.
- Provide research leadership at the University of Reading and in the discipline; contribute to the development and implementation of the research strategy of the University, school, and research division, formal leadership roles such as Research Division Leader or Director of an Interdisciplinary Research Centre.
- Engage in and lead activities that generate high quality social, economic, political, and/or cultural impact from research.
- Contribute to the training and development of PhD students including through recruitment, securing funding, mentoring, and formal supervision; and support them towards the successful completion of their PhD project.

Excelling

- Sustained record of excellent research outputs, with a recognised impact on the discipline.
- Success in securing and managing external research funding to sustain excellent research, exceeding disciplinary norms.
- Instrumental role in achieving high quality social, economic, political, or cultural impact from research.
- Providing expert opinion and advice to external bodies and industry on issues related to personal research.
- Sustained record of successful supervision of doctoral students to completion, and/or of development of PDRAs and research staff.
- Election to prestigious scholarly societies

Leading

- Expert knowledge and thought leadership in the discipline, recognised by peers.
- Significant internal research leadership roles, e.g. winning and leading Doctoral Training Centres and Partnerships, significant collaborative research programmes, and significant externally funded research centres.
- Significant external leadership, e.g. cross-institutional research partnerships, leadership roles in subject organisations, membership of significant national and international advisory groups; or membership of research-related committees such as REF Panels.

Citizenship and Leadership

Citizenship and Leadership encompasses all the activities that contribute to a positive and collegiate environment, to achieving our strategic goals, and that support others working towards these goals. These activities contribute to the governance and leadership of the University, promote an open and inclusive environment on our campuses, and support innovation and positive change.

Citizenship and Leadership make a difference at all levels – from individual teaching teams or research groups, to departments and Schools, and the University and beyond, supporting an open and inclusive academic culture, and strengthening the reputation of the University of Reading. They demonstrate a personal commitment towards the successful development of the University and its communities, and to the principles of the 3 Rs – Resourceful, Responsible, and Respectful – that are the foundation for how we work with each other as a University community.

Citizenship and Leadership can include:

- Serving on formal departmental, school, or University committees;
- Formal involvement in the leadership of teaching and research, and of supporting students;
- Advancing equality and diversity at the University;
- Contributions to strategic activities at all levels;
- Academic citizenship outside the University, e.g. through service in learned societies, professional bodies, or research funders;
- Continued professional development;
- Contribution to recruitment and widening participation;
- Involvement in or leadership of cultural and institutional change.



Lecturer

A lecturer will actively contribute to departmental and school responsibilities, invest time and effort in their own professional development, and engage with the wider principles of the University Strategy, beyond contributing to Academic excellence (Community, Engaged University, Sustainability).

Achieving

- Fulfilling departmental and/or school responsibilities as agreed with the Head of Department/School, or line manager.
- Supporting colleagues, e.g. through peer review, feedback, or mentoring, as appropriate.
- Investing in their own personal and professional development.

Excelling and Leading

- Positive and effective contribution to departmental and school meetings, committees and initiatives.
- Excellent performance in formal academic administrative roles in the department/school.
- Volunteering for one-off duties.
- Active involvement in institution-wide networks and communities of practice.
- Proactively providing support to colleagues and students.
- Leading strategic projects in the Department or School.
- Line managing and supporting the development of PDRAs and GTAs, where appropriate.
- Contributing to the success of University-level projects or partnerships.
- Service in formal roles in the Department or School.
- Engaging externally with partners, funders, or disciplinary and professional associations.

Associate Professor

An Associate Professor will actively contribute to the running and leadership of a school or department and contribute to the development of other colleagues who are at earlier stages of their career, supporting their career development through mentoring and peer support. They support the wider development and implementation of academic strategies and activities across the University (e.g. internationalisation, equality and diversity, teaching and learning, research, or sustainability), through participation in relevant committees, working groups, or networks. They contribute to the activities of learned societies or disciplinary associations, where appropriate. They are serving as a beacon within their department or school for positive, collegiate behaviour and the University's values.

Achieving

- Sustained positive contribution to the management of the department or school, and to departmental and school decision-making.
- Sustained positive contribution to the development of colleagues who are at earlier stages of their careers through mentoring and peer review.
- Fostering an open and inclusive environment in the Department/School.
- Sustained investment into their own personal and professional development.

Excelling and Leading

- Contributing to the development of a vision and strategy for the school or department.
- Enhancing the effective management and development of the school or department through proactive service in formal leadership roles.
- Working with professional and academic colleagues in the school and across the University to deliver projects, initiatives, or improvements.
- Effective contributing to relevant University-wide committees and project groups.
- Sustained contribution to recruitment and widening participation.
- Promotion and dissemination of best academic practice and innovation across the institution.
- Supervision of research groups or teaching teams, with evidence of impact.
- Building and developing beneficial external partnerships, e.g. with other educational institutions, funders, or disciplinary and professional associations.



Professor

A Professor will contribute to the vision and leadership for their school or department, and where appropriate provide management to staff, and support colleagues in their roles and career development through mentoring and peer support. They contribute to the wider development and implementation of academic strategies and activities across the University (e.g. internationalisation, equality and diversity, teaching and learning, research, or sustainability), through participation in and leadership of relevant committees, working groups, or networks. They are serving as a beacon within their Department or School for positive, collegiate behaviour and the University's values. They contribute to the activities of learned societies or disciplinary associations, where appropriate.

Achieving

- Sustained leadership and management of academic activities in the School or Department, and leadership of Departmental and School committees.
- Personal leadership of the development of colleagues, and of a culture of support and mentoring within teams, departments, or schools.
- Actively promoting an open and inclusive environment in the Department/School and fulfilling responsibilities as agreed with the Head of Department/School or line manager
- Investment in their own professional and leadership development.

Excelling and Leading

- Substantial contribution to the development of a vision and strategy for the school or department, or institutional activities and projects.
- Outstanding leadership at the department, school, or University level through formal or informal leadership activities.
- Lead relevant University-wide committees and project groups.
- Substantial and measurable contribution to recruitment and/or widening participation.
- Senior level engagement with, or leadership of, funders, partners or disciplinary and professional associations.
- Creating and developing external partnerships that bring significant value to the University.
- Providing expert opinion and advice to external bodies and industry on issues pertaining to professional and/or disciplinary expertise.
- Promotion and dissemination of best academic practice and innovation across the institution and beyond.
- Leadership of national or international partnerships.
- Contribute personally to the development of the University's national and international profile, as appropriate.

“At the core of our mission to transform lives at a local, national and global scale is pride in being the best we can be. Our education, research and professional activities must be of the highest standard to deliver on this promise. Being supportive, diverse and inclusive does not mean we are content with mediocrity. Far from being mutually exclusive, we can use the strength of our community to drive quality. This requires a culture of continuous improvement as well as the tools and facilities that allow all members of our community to be accountable for their own activity. We must embrace change and innovation, and the risks that come with it, and accept that failure can be part of the path towards excellence.”

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