

## Interview Schedule: 'Ingredients for fostering a healthy research environment'

The questions have been designed to explore in as much depth as possible the wide range of factors that may contribute to a healthy competitive/productive research environment, so that this information may contribute to a better understanding of how this also contributes to a culture of research integrity, and to enable good practices to be shared across the University. The interview is about listening and understanding what makes a department/research centre/research team tick – no judgement will be made on the department/research centre/team and there is no intention to report on any 'problem' areas. The questions have been informed by a range of information sources including key University policies and documents (e.g. University and Faculty Strategic Plans, the Good Research & Innovation Practices policy) as well as a range of research publications related to research culture and performance. The questions are intended as a guide, and further questions may be asked in order to investigate certain aspects in more detail, or to investigate any aspects that come to light that are not covered by the existing questions. Some key definitions are provided below:

### KEY DEFINITIONS:

#### **ENVIRONMENT ('external conditions' 'physical surroundings and conditions'):**

**UK Concordat To Support Research Integrity's definition:** A research environment is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers. Includes:

- Clear policies, practices, procedures to support researchers.
- Suitable learning, training, mentoring opportunities to support researchers.
- Robust management systems to ensure policies relating to research, RI and behaviour are implemented.
- Awareness amongst researchers of standards and behaviours expected of them.
- Systems that identify potential concerns at an early stage and mechanisms for providing support.

**REF's definition:** In REF the research environment is assessed in terms of its 'vitality' and 'sustainability' ('environment' covers strategy, people, income infrastructure facilities, collaboration & contribution to the discipline).

#### **CULTURE ('cultivation' 'customs') GUIDES THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS**

Culture is a distinctiveness/identity that everyone understands, shares and values – everyone is on same boat and knows where boat is heading; 'the way we do things around here'. A system of beliefs, understandings, knowledge, and meanings. May include 'war stories', sagas, tales and rituals'. Rituals are patterns of social activity that express and articulate specific meaning to members. A set of shared norms, values, beliefs and assumptions along with the behaviour and other artefacts that express these orientations, including symbols, rituals, stories and language.

#### **CLIMATE ('current public feeling or perception') GUIDES THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS AND IS ONE COMPONENT OF CULTURE**

Can include the following factors which influence an organisation's working environment, providing context for conduct:

- Mission and values
- Standards that people set
- Performance feedback and rewards
- Flexibility (how free people feel to innovate)
- Sense of responsibility
- Level of commitment to a common purpose

**Questions**

**RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT**

What is the size/shape/structure of the department/research centre/team? Have there been any recent changes?

What does a healthy research environment mean to you?

What key factors contribute to the research environment in your department/centre/team? Which are the most important and why?

What do you think about the definition of culture provided with these questions (i.e. shared purpose/values/expectations/norms/beliefs/ assumptions)?

Do you think there is a particular culture (or series of sub-cultures) in your department/centre/team? How does this contribute to the research environment?

Do you think there is anything that makes your department/centre/team's research culture distinctive – what gives its identity?

Do you feel that the landscape external to the department/centre/team (in the wider University and sector as a whole) is conducive to fostering a healthy research culture in the department/centre/team? Why?

**LEADERSHIP**

How do you approach the leadership of the research conducted within your department/centre/team?

What impact do you think your leadership style has on department/centre/team research activities? What aspects are really essential to success?

What kind of research strategy do you have in the department/centre/team?

What are the main challenges you face/concerns you have as a research leader?

**STRUCTURES/ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT RESEARCH**

How is research structured and supported in the department/centre/team?

What are the key ways that communication about research takes place within the department/centre/team? Which do you think are most important to a healthy research environment?

How does the department/centre/team set and maintain standards for its research?

What happens if it comes to light that expected standards are not being followed and how are such issues identified?

**RECRUITMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF**

What are your selection criteria when recruiting new research staff?

What are your induction processes for new research staff?

What training/development opportunities are available to research staff/students?

Are there systems/processes used in the department for providing researchers with performance feedback?

Are there structures/processes in place to motivate and reward research staff?

Has the department/centre/team had to deal with many disagreements between researchers (e.g. disputes over authorship, supervisor-supervisee disagreements)? How are such issues resolved?

**CLOSING QUESTIONS**

What do you see as the key barriers to developing a healthy, competitive research environment that fosters a culture of research integrity?

Do you have any critical feedback on the University's approach to date to promoting research integrity?

Any final thoughts?

**Thank you for your participation**