

RESEARCH CULTURE REFLECTION



FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS



This document has been co-created by the Research Strategy Office and the Research Culture team, as a prompt for reflecting on current practice and areas for improvement, and to assist with writing research culture sections of grant applications. It represents a general guide for what funders are looking for. It applies most concretely to disciplines where working in research groups and teams is the norm.

General tips

Funders are looking for a response that is personal to you, or the team/department/unit applying for funding. They will be alert to boilerplate text and 'copy-paste' responses.

Feedback from funders indicates there are activities they consider standard in universities, and therefore do not make an application stand out. These include (for example): generic mentoring schemes, annual appraisals, training programmes and standard policies and frameworks.

Good applications usually focus less on *what* activities and initiatives are in place, and more on *how* these are used to create the right culture.

The following questions will help you to reflect on the kind of content that would be appropriate for research culture related questions in grant applications (note that you do not need to cover every point):

Managing a Research Team



- How do you set expectations with your research group, and particularly new group members?
- How often do you review these expectations? Are group members invited to co-create team guides/charters?
- How do you support researchers in your group/team to navigate the professional development offering at your university to find what would be valuable to them? Do you encourage participation by doing so yourself? Do you look for professional development opportunities that are not training courses, such as a new project or task?
- In what ways do you support researchers to develop independence from you as their PI?
- How do you equip yourself to work with people who are not the same as you? What recruitment practices do you use to ensure that not all of your research group are the same as you?

- What happens when there are disagreements in your group? How are these handled? Have you taken on board and acted on feedback from a more junior researcher?
- How do you run meetings to enable everyone to participate as fully as possible?
- How do you celebrate success in your group? What kind of success and whose success do you celebrate?
- How often and how do you reflect on your own leadership and people management approaches? How do you get support with this?

Research Practice

- How do you facilitate good research practice in your research group or team?
- How do you support open, transparent and (if relevant) reproducible research practices in your group/team?
- How do you ensure those in your group or team are assessed responsibly and fairly, for the full range of their research outputs, but also for the quality of their research practices?
- How do you enable team members to raise concerns, admit mistakes and have honest and open conversations?
- Have you taken any steps to enable your research group or team to work in a way that supports the environmental sustainability of your research?

Research environments will be in varying stages of development, and the above questions might have highlighted challenges and opportunities in your own group or team. The points in the diagram below can be used to reflect on this, and assist in forward planning:

