**INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH LEAVE SCHEME**

**I am not on a T&R contract – can I still apply?**

This scheme is open to all staff who either undertake research or enable research. The aim of the scheme is to significantly improve our institutional submission to REF2028, so the proposed activity will need to enhance our submission to one of the three elements of assessment for REF2028 – outputs, impacts and research culture/environment.

This is in line with current proposals for REF2028, which may accept research outputs by staff who are not REF eligible. We are able to submit impact case studies where the research and/or impact have been lead or facilitated by colleagues who are not REF eligible, as long as the underpinning outputs met the REF definition of research.

Research culture projects can apply to the wider research community, including those who are in professional services roles that support/enable research.

**I would like to apply for funds to enhance research culture – what do I do?**

We are looking for creative and innovative projects that will enhance research culture, either at unit of assessment, School or institutional level. Much of this element of assessment is still to be determined by the funding councils, but the following overall headings apply:

* Measures that improve research conduct and working practices, including research integrity, reproducibility, open research, collaboration, interdisciplinarity etc
* Measures that enhance staff development and career progression at all career stages and for all professional backgrounds involved in the research process
* Measures that enhance research assessment and evaluation, including responsible use of metrics in research assessment and responsible research, innovation and engagement
* Measures that improve equality, diversity and inclusion

The projects should include ways of measuring or evaluating their impact. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their project proposal with a Research Dean or the REF Manager prior to submission.

**What kind of impact related activity will the scheme fund?**

The main focus of the leave scheme is to improve our submission to REF2028. Activities proposed to enhance impact therefore need to be deliver aspects of high quality impact case studies ready for submission by the end of 2027. This can include additional engagement activities, researching and gathering evidence to support impact claims, evaluating impact, supporting (additional) underpinning research publications.

Applicants are encouraged to discuss their project proposal with a member of the Impact Team.

**If my application is successful, do I have to take leave starting in Term 1 in 2024/25?**

Start and end dates of the scheme are flexible, provided the expense falls into financial year 2024/25. All applications require support from the relevant Head of School or Director of Professional Services, so any arrangements will need to work for the researcher taking leave and their School.

**Do I need to create an application in Worktribe for this?**Yes, create an application and select the University of Aberdeen as the funder.

**Does my application need to include detailed costings?**

Yes. We are inviting fully costed applications. Please discuss with colleagues in Research Finance.

**Will this be the only call for proposals for institutional leave?**

We are planning to launch another call, budgets permitting, in the following years up to 2028. Given that one of the aims of the scheme is to improve the quality of outputs and impacts for REF2028, we are looking primarily for proposals that will significantly enhance our REF submission for 2028, but will also consider proposals with benefits beyond that time frame.

**I have just/recently returned from/am about to go on School sponsored research leave. Can I still apply?**

Yes, you can combine School sponsored research leave and institutional research leave provided there is a strong academic case for it and you have the approval of your Head of School.

**What are the expectations in terms of outcomes?**

We are looking for publications that are likely to be graded 4\* for REF purposes, so applications are likely to request additional time for further investigation or analysis to enhance an output, or time to start new projects that are capable of producing 4\* outputs (preferably before end of 2027).

We are strongly encouraging proposals for activities that will facilitate impact or enhance developing impact, with a view to creating impact case studies that are capable of achieving 4\* grades.

We are also looking for proposals around research environment/culture that would enhance our institutional or a Unit of Assessment environment significantly and add an element of 4\* to our submission.

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