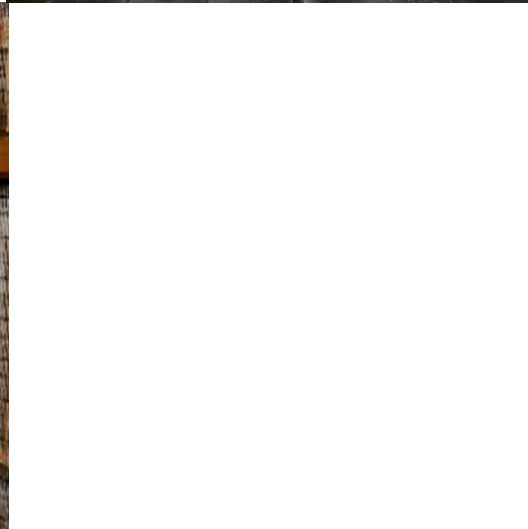


# Flourish@Durham: Vision, Values, Actions

Making research fun, fulfilling and fruitful for our communities



# Durham's Research Culture

The Flourish@Durham project was initiated by the Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research in October 2021 with the aim of ensuring the best environment possible for all those involved in research at Durham University to develop and flourish.

The title 'Flourish' reflects the ambition that we enable our research community to do well, achieve their best and enjoy working at Durham. The initial consultation document (Flourish@Durham: Cultivating Research Culture, October 2021) outlined where the problems lay referencing external reports and evidence from our internal staff survey. This document was discussed at Research Culture Committee and with its backing the Research Culture Team (now renamed the Flourish Team) initiated two strands of consultation in the spring and summer of 2022:

- ◆ Consultations on the key values our research community felt were characteristic of positive research culture;
- ◆ Consultations with specific staff groups on priorities for action that would enable them to flourish.

These consultations have enabled the Flourish Team to move forward to define the values that will enable our community to flourish and to start to undertake the actions we need to achieve them. This document sets out the Vision, Values and Actions that have come out of this process. This is a living document and a living process: none of this is set in stone. As we move forward and achieve some positive outcomes, our values may change and develop and new actions will follow.

Find out more about the Flourish@Durham Research Culture Project on our Sharepoint site: [Flourish at Durham - \(sharepoint.com\)](#)



Professor Jane Macnaughton  
Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)



Andrew Moss  
Research Culture Manager

## The Flourish Team

The Flourish Team is a subgroup of Research Culture Committee tasked with the practical roll out of the Flourish Project.

Professor Jane Macnaughton, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research),  
Andrew Moss, Research Culture Manager, RIS  
Lorna Wilson, Co Director, RIS  
Catherine Brewer, Research Policy Officer, RIS  
Christina Munn, Marketing and Communications Manager, RIS  
Flourish@Durham Student Interns

# Our Vision

## **FLOURISH@DURHAM SEEKS TO MAKE RESEARCH FUN, FULFILLING AND FRUITFUL FOR OUR COMMUNITIES**

Flourish@Durham is committed to the cultivation of a research culture that is characterised by respect and care; where diversity of person, career track and role are valued, encouraged, and supported and collaboration and interdisciplinarity are cherished.

Flourish@Durham seeks to ensure research is carried out in an atmosphere of creativity, and fun where individuals and teams feel ambitious about their work and are enabled to achieve their potential.





## About Our Vision

Our vision statement reflects the agreement on values we achieved through the consultation. It also reflects a number of commitments by the Flourish leads and the entire community in undertaking the project.

**Progress requires personal responsibility as well as leadership. This is a shared endeavour which will engage our research community: researchers, professional services staff, technical staff and research infrastructure colleagues.**

Those involved need to own the vision in order to take up and progress the actions and behaviours that will support it. We are all responsible for culture change, even if not engaged in undertaking specific actions, because it requires shifts in behaviours, language and ways of interacting with others and expectations of people and processes, as well as specific actions. This all takes time.

Culture change is not about an end point. It is a process of evolution and development: of people, of structures, and of environment. It involves regulation (and compliance) but also the idea of creative and spontaneous growth, nurtured by high quality leadership but engendered by the participants themselves. Some of what we may be able to achieve will happen quickly; some more subtle aspects of culture take time, and require buy-in from everyone and clear policies for addressing behaviour that falls short of our expectations as a flourishing community.



# Commitments

The consultation process identified that our research community is characterised by enthusiasm and ambition but held back by processes, environments and behaviours that do not enable great work.

Our commitments oversee everything that we do to help realise the potential of our extraordinary research community.

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Values  
driven  
approach

Valuing  
everyone's  
role

Developing a  
positive culture

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Openness  
in  
communication

Celebrating  
success  
and recognising  
process

Affirming  
interdisciplinary  
research

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Learning from  
others

Fostering a  
global research  
community

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# Commitments in Detail

## Values-driven Approach

We commit to adopting a values-driven approach that oversees everything we do from developing a strategy to how we live, work and study together.

## Developing a positive culture

We seek to develop a positive culture as an iterative process. Some actions may be simple to finalise but other may take more time to develop.

## Valuing everyone's role

We recognise the value of everyone's role in creating a positive research culture: staff (professional, technical, academic), research students, undergraduates; and of the influence of place (this City) on our culture.

## Celebrating success and recognising process

We will celebrate and recognise not just successful outcomes of research, but success in process: building teams towards grant applications, supporting and mentoring colleagues, contributions to a more inclusive research ecosystem.

## Affirming interdisciplinary research

We value the contribution of research across disciplines and modes, including discovery and challenge-based research i.e. fundamental research starts with generating research questions often in interdisciplinary contexts and for which the impacts may not be immediately obvious.

## Fostering a global research community

We want to encourage the development of a research community drawn from talent across the world recognising that this brings challenges in learning and respecting others and inducting others into a research culture that may be very different from their own.

## Learning from others

We will demonstrate a commitment to a culture of openness and collegiality through continuous learning from others across the sector (such as colleagues in the N8) and collaborating on possible joint projects to improve culture across Higher Education Institutions.

## Openness in communication

We commit to being open and reachable in our communications. We want to take people with us, enable our community to feel and be involved, to understand when things might be difficult to achieve and to be engaged in finding solutions.



# Values

In May and June 2022 we held two Research Culture Values workshops facilitated by Dr Lizzie Gadd and the INORMS Research Evaluation Group.<sup>1</sup> This is in accordance with our first commitment to a values-driven approach, but also to ensure that our community at Durham was given the opportunity to shape the Flourish agenda and achieve a sense of ownership over the process.

The workshops were open to everyone involved in the research community and a total of just over 70 participated. Our workshop facilitator noted that participants were proud to work at Durham and despite the recent challenges of COVID we were impressed by the energy and ambition to do well demonstrated by colleagues at these workshops. The outcomes from these workshops have enabled us to define a set of key valued attributes that a positive research culture at Durham should be characterised by:

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Diversity and  
inclusion

Avoiding silos

Good  
relationships

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Research  
ambition

High quality  
spaces and  
resources

Having enough  
time

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High quality  
enabling support

Space for  
mistakes and  
learn from failure

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## Values in Detail

Diversity and inclusion	Not confined to protected characteristics, this also encompasses diversity of career track, diversity in research approach and respect for all staff involved in research.
Good relationships	Including supportive mentoring and leadership, feeling like you 'belong', a civic commitment to the regional community.
Avoiding silos	We value a joined-up and co-ordinated approach to research culture, one that is characterised by shared expertise and endeavour that embeds cross-institutional working to the benefit of all.
Research ambition	Durham staff are ambitious wanting to strive to be the best they can be, and encouraged and supported by research leaders.
Having enough time	Recognising that time for research is different in quality and extent to time for teaching, there is a need to find ways to release more time.
High quality spaces and resources	Co-location of research teams in well-designed and pleasant spaces where people can eat and drink together is important as well as facilities for research.
Spaces to make mistakes and learn from failure	A positive culture requires safe spaces where there is freedom and time to fail, ask 'stupid questions' and have fun.
High Quality Enabling Support	Processes and structures need to enable research to be like 'running down hill'. Policies and processes need to be quick and easy to find and understand.



# Actions

There is indeed fertile ground for the Flourish project and we have already embarked on a number of actions that will address these values, but there are some we are yet to address and develop.

Joined-up approach

Attention to language

Good communication

Flourish internship programme

Early career researcher development

Leading Researchers programme

Time for research

Celebrating research

Developing the Research Staff Association

Recognition and reward for technical staff

Investment in staff and structures

Ensuring that support and policies are easily accessible

Open Scholarship Working Group

Respect Commission

Mapping our training offer

Supporting the provision of research infrastructure

Research culture focus on progression & promotion

# Flourish@Durham Actions

## Themes

**C**reating the best environment for all to flourish

**A**mbitious in our research and positive in our culture

**R**espectful of everyone's role and investing in our community

**E**nabling structures that encourage collaboration and openness



## Creating the best environment for all to flourish

Action	Detail	Commitments and Values	Measure
Joined-up approach	We need a joined-up approach ensuring culture change being effected elsewhere in the University is part of this process and identifying where there are conflicts. This requires a mapping of strategies and structures internally and externally that drive or influence research culture.	Developing a Positive Culture Good Relationships Avoiding Silos	Engagement with Flourish Project from both internal and external stakeholders
Attention to language	Our ongoing commitment to behaviour and culture change is led from the front and disseminated through key research leaders and influencers in the University. We need to replace words like competition with <b>collaboration</b> ; performance management with <b>nurturing</b> ; success with <b>thriving</b> and <b>flourishing</b> . Our approach to culture change will not emphasise the end points of compliance but the continual aim of striving to improve. This is not something that is amenable to action planning or policy statements but is about modelling behaviour, as well as ensuring the internal and external structures and drivers do not militate against achieving change.	Openness in Communication Good Relationships Diversity and Inclusion	Engagement with Flourish Project from both internal and external stakeholders
Communicating Flourish@Durham	A communications plan will be developed and we are committed to regular consultation and feedback with staff groups. Trust and belief is critical to the success of Flourish and we want to demonstrate when we have achieved positive outcomes but also be honest when things are more difficult.  The Flourish Team will work to ensure information goes out about how we are striving to change culture and so that the language we use is reflected in external communications. We want prospective staff to have a positive message about change in Durham and to experience that change when they come here.	Openness in Communication High Quality Enabling Support	Engagement with Flourish Sharepoint Site Attendance and feedback from Research Culture Cafes and events Engagement with external site
Flourish@Durham internship programme	The Flourish Team will appoint four students interns to work alongside the RSA, technical staff, open scholarship working group and Faculties to deliver the projects leading from these actions.	Learning from Others Good Relationships High Quality Enabling Support	Feedback from Interns Engagement with Research Culture projects Long-term project developments

## Ambitious in our research and positive in our culture

Action	Detail	Commitments and Values	Measure
Early Career Researcher Development	The Flourish Team have been in discussion with those managing the Liverpool University 'Prosper' programme which has developed a coaching, training, mentoring platform for ECRs looking for careers beyond academia. <sup>2</sup> Liverpool will be sharing their experience and the practical platform with us and during 2023 we will explore setting up a similar programme at Durham.	Developing a Positive Culture Learning from Others Diversity and Inclusion Research Ambition	Design and delivery of the pilot programme Qualitative feedback from ECRs
Leading Researchers Programme	This programme, led by 64 Million Artists, has been successfully piloted at KCL, Edinburgh, Glasgow and UCD. <sup>3</sup> It will enable 24 mid-senior career researchers to spend 6 months working on their next big idea for research supported by a programme of personal and personal development. A key element of the programme will be collaborative working and learning from others.	Developing a Positive Culture Research Ambition Space to Mistakes and Learn from Failure	Uptake and qualitative responses to Leading Researchers Programme
Time for Research	University Workload Steering Group has produced a series of workload principles that will lead to a review of ways of working across the institution and across staff roles. The intention is to identify smarter ways of working. The DPVC-R will ensure that the group recognises the nature of time for research which involves 'chunky' time - extended period for working on papers/research grants.	Developing a Positive Culture Having Enough Time Research Ambition	DU Staff Survey CEDARS Survey Use of workload modelling consistency
Celebrating Research	The Flourish Team will explore how to do more to celebrate research in Durham, across staff roles and stages, including the possibility of hosting a celebratory event.	Celebrating Success and Recognising Process Good Relationships Research Ambition	Staff feedback and engagement

## Respectful of everyone's role and investing in our community

Action	Detail	Commitments and Values	Measure
Development of the Research Staff Association	The RSA has had no support to run activities or manage meetings and has relied on the good will and efforts of postdocs and ECRs often on precarious contracts. Our consultation demonstrated that this group felt disparate, lacking a voice and unsupported. The RSA will be supported by a Flourish@Durham student intern and in 2022-23 be given a budget to support training and activities.	Valuing Everyone's Role Diversity and Inclusion Research Ambition High Quality Spaces and Resources	Increased membership of RSA Feedback from activities RSA team engagement and qualitative feedback
Recognition and Reward for Technical Staff	The Flourish team have invested funding in the support of the Technicians Commitment and one of our Interns will work will work to support the technical staff to improve communication tools, support the work of the Technician Commitment Steering Group, and enable preparations for the Technical Staff Survey. Membership of the National Technicians Development Centre is funded through the ERC budget.	Valuing Everyone's Role Diversity and Inclusion High Quality Spaces and Resources	Technical staff report greater job satisfaction. Increase provision of training opportunities for technical staff
Investment in Staff and Structures	The RIS Directorate have undertaken a review of research support services and are currently recruiting in areas that have been identified as under resourced such as post award. Successful roll out of the staff intranet will be key to staff knowing how to access support. Understanding, appreciating and respecting the expertise of professional and technical staff is critical to recruiting great people and good relationships across staff groups means we can keep them.	Valuing Everyone's Role Diversity and Inclusion High Quality Enabling Support	Staff report smoother, faster processes in research support
Ensuring that support and policies are easily accessible in the intranet	A new staff intranet is about to be launched and we need to monitor its effectiveness in ensuring staff can access the information and contacts they need.	High Quality Spaces and Resources	Intranet works to enable access to support



## Enabling structures that encourage collaboration and openness

Action	Detail	Commitments and Values	Measure
Respect Commission	The Flourish Team will work alongside the EDI Unit to support progress on achieving the recommendations of the Respect Commission. <sup>4</sup> The DPVC-R and RIS Co-Director sit on the Respect Oversight Group and will connect work on Flourish with work towards progressing the Commission's recommendations.	Values Drive Approach Learning from Others Diversity and Inclusion Avoiding Silos	Feedback and progress from ROG CEDARS Survey Responses
Mapping our Training Offer	The Flourish Team interns are mapping training across the university delivered by DCAD, HROD, EDI Unit, RIS, Research Institutes and Centres and Departments. At the moment it is not possible to access our wide training offer on a single site as it is distributed across silos. The mapping exercise will enable us to see what is on offer and detect gaps, as well as offer a clear portfolio of opportunities to our wider community to support development.	Celebrating Success and Recognising Process Research Ambition High Quality Spaces and Resources	Achievement of a single online space for research and development training offers Improved ability for staff to access appropriate training
Open Scholarship Working Group	The Research Culture Committee has established an Open Scholarship group whose remit is to develop a vision for Open Scholarship across the University that goes beyond compliance with funder requirements. This group will report to RCC and RC and produce its draft vision by the end of 2022-3.	Developing a Positive Culture Affirming Interdisciplinary Research High Quality Enabling Support	Development of DU's Vision for Open Scholarship Production of communications for the OS Working Group Increased visibility of Open Scholarship across the University

## Enabling structures that encourage collaboration and openness

Action	Detail	Commitments and Values	Measure
Supporting the provision of Research Infrastructure	Research Infrastructure review underway led by the Dean of Infrastructure, Professor Stefan Przyborski. Investment expected to follow tackling key priorities in the first instance.	High Quality Spaces and Resources	Staff feedback on progress made to improve resources/ infrastructure
Research Culture focus on Progression and Promotion	Progression and promotion processes reflect behavioural and attitudinal change. We are committed to a focus on process not just outcomes, and to capture effort not just success. Citizenship will have equal value with research and education in the DPPC process in 2022-3.	Developing a Positive Culture Valuing Everyone's Role Space for Mistakes and Learn from Failure	Staff feedback and data from the DPPC process

## References

<sup>1</sup> <https://inorms.net/scope-framework-for-research-evaluation/>

<sup>2</sup> 'Prosper' is a programme developed by Liverpool University to support career choice and diversity for ECRs. <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/prosper/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.64millionartists.com/our-work/kings-college-london/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.durham.ac.uk/respect/>