THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

Research Profiling Exercise 2009 – Final Report

0. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Research Profiling Exercise conducted by the University in the 2009/10 academic session, including a summary of the outcomes at school and faculty level.

1. Background and Rationale

In a variety of communications issued between June and September 2009, the University announced a new annual exercise for profiling its research activities. This exercise was intended to support and guide strategic development of the University, building on the excellent outcome of RAE 2008 and assisting progress towards 2015 aspirations. It would also provide an important aspect of preparation for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework.

The scope of the RPE included all staff on the University payroll as of 31 July 2009 whose contracts included an expectation of independent research activity. Staff with explicit teaching-only contracts would not be included. A full criteria and working methods document was published, setting out the nature of the data which would form the basis of the research profiles and the assessment criteria to be utilised by each of the assessment panels/sub-panels [*]. All eligible staff were invited to use the University staff portal to review and contribute to their research profile and were provided with opportunities to edit data (notably on outputs) or to provide comments where they queried its accuracy. All such comments provided by staff formed an integral part of the assessment material considered by panels.

2. Assessment Structure

The University Profiling Group (UPG) oversaw the profiling exercise, establishing the overall principles and structure of the process and being responsible for the approval of assessment panel membership, criteria and outcomes. The membership of the UPG was:

President and Vice-Chancellor
Deputy President and Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Vice-President for Research
Associate Vice-President for Graduate Education
Faculty Dean and Vice-Presidents
Faculty Associate Deans for Research
Registrar and Secretary
University Librarian
Associate Vice-President for Equality and Diversity (by invitation)

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[*] This document can be found at: http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/researchoffice/criteria-and-working-methods-model-v7.pdf

Assessment of research activity was undertaken by four faculty assessment panels, supplemented in the case of the Faculty of Humanities by three sub-panels each covering a range of cognate disciplinary areas. Each panel included at least one member from a different faculty and at least one member external to the University. The membership of these panels was as follows:

Faculty of Medicine and Human Sciences

Dean and Vice President for MHS (Chair)
Associate Dean for Research
Heads of Research Schools of Medicine (4)
Heads/Research Directors of Health Schools (4)
Representative from another Faculty
External member

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Dean and Vice-President for EPS (Chair)
Associate Dean for Research for EPS
A representative from each EPS School (9)
Representative from another Faculty
External member

Faculty of Life Sciences

Dean and Vice President for FLS (Chair)
Associate Dean for Research for FLS
FLS Section Heads (6)
FLS Research Group Leaders
Representative from another Faculty
External member

* Assessment of members of staff in the Paterson Institute for Cancer Research was undertaken by the Faculty of Life Sciences Assessment Panel.

Faculty of Humanities

Faculty Panel:

Dean and Vice President for Humanities (Chair)
Deputy Dean/ADR (Vice-chair)
School Research Directors (7)
Associate Vice-President for Graduate Education
Representative from another Faculty
External member

Sub-panel A (covering activity in Law, MBS and Education):

Associate Vice-President for Graduate Education (Chair), School Research Directors and a leading researcher from each discipline area or division, where possible with RAE Panel experience.

Sub-panel B (covering activity in SoSS and SED):

Deputy Dean (Chair), School Research Directors and a leading researcher from each discipline area or division, where possible with RAE Panel experience.

Sub-panel C (covering activity in SAHC and SLLC):

Dean (Chair), School Research Directors and a leading researcher from each discipline area or division, where possible with RAE Panel experience.

3. Assessment Process

Panels/sub-panels met and concluded their business during November and December 2009. Based on the available evidence and the relevant panel criteria the research activity of each reviewed individual was assessed with reference to the following quality levels:

    a. Internationally leading;
    b. Internationally recognised;
    c. Nationally recognised;
    d. Not achieving the standards of national or international recognition

Due recognition was given during the evaluation process to early career researcher status (individuals of any age who first entered the academic profession as an independent researcher after 1 January 2005), employment type (part-time/full-time) and any exceptional individual circumstances. Full guidance relating to eligible circumstances was provided in the criteria and working methods document. Expectations were adjusted in relation to the volume (rather than quality) of research outputs or other indicators.

Members of all panels/sub-panels declared any conflicts of interest before commencing the assessment process and did not participate in the assessment of individuals in cases where the conflict of interest was considered by the panel to be significant. Panels/sub-panels agreed to respect the principle of confidentiality relating to the data included in staff profiles and the outcomes of the assessment process, and members signed a confidentiality agreement to this effect.

Assessments included an opinion from a panel member from the academic area closest to the activity being assessed and took account of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary variations in typical income profiles (volume and diversity) and in mode and rate of publication. Bibliometric information was available to panels but, given the variation in the extent to which this was available for subject areas and individual outputs, citation data was not given a material role in determining assessment outcomes. Further advice was also received from other panels on individual cases where this provided additional sources of expertise. During the assessment process, profiles from the following schools/areas were cross-referred between assessment panels in order to provide further reassurance about the robustness of judgement across the RPE as a whole:

    • MBS (Business Systems and PMO)
    • Cancer and Imaging Sciences (ISBE)
    • Life Sciences (Structural Functional Systems and Optometry)
    • Chemistry (Biological Chemistry)
    • Paterson Institute for Cancer Research

- Nursing
- Psychological Sciences

Cross referrals showed good agreement between assessment panels, with one exception where further assessment was undertaken.

Following completion of their assessment processes panels/sub-panels reported the full outcome of their assessment, including the quality level assigned to each individual member of staff, to the University Research Office. Summary analyses of these outcomes, at Faculty, School, 'Division' and RAE UoA level, were considered by the University Profiling Group and compared with the external corroboration provided by UoA profiles from RAE 2008 (suitably interpreted to allow for appropriate comparison). Reports were received from each of the external members of assessment panels/sub-panels which expressed their confidence in the robustness of the process.

An equalities assessment of the outcome will also be conducted and reported to the University Profiling Group. The University will investigate should any *prima facie* imbalance be found relative to the quality levels awarded within the total potential pool. This monitoring process is an important way of determining whether measures taken by the University to combat unlawful or unfair discrimination are effective, and will play an important part in ensuring that equality is a reality within the University.

Individual assessment outcomes will be retained by the University Research Office and will be released to Heads of School and, where relevant, the immediate line manager(s) of assessed staff. Staff will have the opportunity to receive their grade and related feedback from the assessment panel but will be under no obligation to receive this. Individual assessment outcomes will not form part of Performance and Development Review or the consideration of promotion cases.

An appeals procedure will be made available to staff when receiving their grade and feedback. The procedure sets out the deadlines by which appeals must be submitted and the grounds upon which they much be based.

4. Assessment Outcome

A total of 2172 members of staff were assessed during the exercise. Profiles for faculties and schools are shown overleaf in Table 1. It should be noted that overall profiles may be higher in some areas because individual contributions to multi-author outputs or to multi-investigator grants were not dissociated. In subsequent RPE exercises it will be important to better distinguish individual staff contributions as this will be required for the University REF planning. Some areas with lower profiles may have higher proportions of staff at an early career stage. It is to be expected that more widespread evidence of high research quality will accumulate in subsequent years as research careers develop.

Table 1

School/Faculty Assessment Panel:	Graded	%D	%C	%B	%A
School of Physics & Astronomy	84	3.6%	19.1%	48.8%	28.6%
Sch. of Earth, Atmospheric & Environmental Sciences	49	11.2%	19.4%	32.7%	36.7%
School of Chemistry	66	7.6%	22.7%	37.9%	31.8%
School of Computer Science	71	20.4%	12.7%	38.7%	28.2%
School of Mathematics	70	21.4%	15.0%	34.3%	29.3%
School of Materials	63	19.1%	23.0%	29.4%	28.6%
Sch. of Chem. Engineering & Analytical Sciences	44	15.9%	33.0%	21.6%	29.6%
School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering	59	17.0%	33.9%	30.5%	18.6%
Sch. of Mechanical, Aerospace & Civil Engineering	77	31.8%	30.5%	20.8%	16.9%
FEPS Assessment Panel TOTAL	**583**	**16.6%**	**22.7%**	**33.5%**	**27.2%**
FLS Assessment Panel TOTAL	**232**	**12.1%**	**26.7%**	**33.6%**	**27.6%**
School of Dentistry	26	19.2%	30.8%	38.5%	11.5%
School Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences*	26	23.1%	26.9%	30.8%	19.2%
School of Community Based Medicine	79	27.8%	25.3%	27.8%	19.0%
School of Psychological Sciences*	74	18.9%	33.8%	33.8%	13.5%
School of Cancer & Imaging Sciences	59	20.3%	39.0%	25.4%	15.3%
School of Translational Medicine	98	20.4%	41.8%	22.4%	15.3%
School of Clinical & Laboratory Sciences	90	28.9%	34.4%	23.3%	13.3%
School of Nursing Midwifery & Social Work	50	36.0%	26.0%	26.0%	12.0%
Manchester Medical School	24	79.2%	16.7%	4.2%	0.0%
FMHS Assessment Panel TOTAL	**526**	**27.0%**	**32.7%**	**26.0%**	**14.3%**
Manchester Business School	216	14.4%	24.5%	35.2%	25.9%
School of Arts, Histories & Cultures	149	2.7%	21.5%	45.6%	30.2%
School of Education	49	12.2%	55.1%	20.4%	12.2%
School of Environment and Development	85	9.4%	24.7%	45.9%	20.0%
School of Languages, Linguistics & Cultures	86	5.8%	25.6%	43.0%	25.6%
School of Law	63	4.8%	39.7%	42.9%	12.7%
School of Social Sciences	183	4.9%	22.4%	44.3%	28.4%
HUMANITIES Assessment Panel TOTAL	**832**	**7.9%**	**26.6%**	**40.7%**	**24.8%**
UNIVERSITY TOTAL	**2172**	**15.3%**	**27.0%**	**34.4%**	**23.2%**

* Profiles for the Schools of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and Psychological Sciences have been revised since the first version of this report (correcting data transcription errors). This revised version was issued on 18 February 2010.