



DRUSSA Conference Consensus

Resolution of actions to take forward from the 2016 Benchmarking and Leadership Conference

Introduction

The **Conference Consensus** document is the product of deliberations at the **2016 DRUSSA Benchmarking and Leadership Conference** (25 – 27 April, Mauritius). It captures and distils the discussions, summaries, outputs and recommendations for action put forward by conference delegates, and can be read in dialogue with the **2016 Final Benchmarking Report**.

The **Conference Consensus** document has two broad purposes. The first is to present the key messages and points of agreement that were shared during the event, as a matter of record; the second is to motivate and support future planning for research uptake with practical, effective and succinct approaches to implementing good practice. In this respect, the **Conference Consensus** should be considered a guideline to inform the design of medium- and long-term action plans in support of sustainable research uptake systems across all 22 DRUSSA partner universities.

Recommendations and actions from the Conference have been organised across four sections:

- **Goals:** Institutional medium- and long-term objectives
 - *Drawn from parallel Regional and Thematic sessions*
- **Tools:** Approaches to meeting medium- and long-term objectives
 - *Drawn from parallel Regional and Thematic sessions*
- **Key recommendations for Vice Chancellors:** The pivotal role of university leadership
 - *Drawn from pre-Conference exercises, in-Conference group work and plenary discussions*
- **Key Good Practice Statements:** High-priority recommendations supporting strategy, staff and research visibility
 - *Drawn from pre-Conference Good Practice Statement ranking exercises and in-Conference group work and plenary discussions*

Goals

Institutional medium- and long-term objectives

- The University should develop a **balanced and translational approach to research** (including basic, applied, industry-facing, community-facing and problem-solving research).
- All staff, across the **wider research ecosystem**, should be sensitised and trained in research uptake methods, practice and purpose.
- The University should **pursue the scholarship of research uptake** to inform strategy and practice with lessons of other institutions.
- The University should facilitate a **research uptake culture**, as well as research uptake systems and processes.
- The University should endorse the role of **researchers as communicators**, and provide the supportive structures to enable researchers to play this role well.

Tools

Approaches to meeting medium- and long-term objectives

- The University should adopt (and amend if necessary) **established metrics** to measure the impact of research and the effectiveness of research management systems.
- The University should recognise and **reward staff efforts towards the conduct of research uptake**, as well as evaluating the impact of research, in any incentivisation scheme. This can help to develop a stronger research uptake culture.
- Research uptake management structures should be **supported by coordinating structures**, made clear through comprehensive organograms, including clear roles and job descriptions.
- **Diversified engagement** can help to achieve a balanced approach to research and a wider pool of potential stakeholders.
- Universities should make the most of **existing platforms**, such as regional Research and Innovation Management Associations (RIMAs), professional networks, and the existing DRUSSA community to facilitate partnership building and the continued sharing of good practice.
- Research uptake leaders can continue to **champion their work across the University**, through maintaining diverse research uptake management teams and conducting inter-faculty “roadshows” to consolidate a research uptake culture.
- The University should consider **aligning research agenda with local, national and regional development goals** to help position itself as a recognised agent of developmental change.
- Universities should formalise stakeholder relationships while maintaining **strong “non-project based” relationships**.
- Universities should **nurture stakeholder participatory research** through formalised relationships to strengthen community outreach and gain the confidence and trust of external, non-academic partners.
- Universities should develop and manage coherent **research information management systems**, including research outputs, partners, stakeholder and funders.
- Universities should **plan for succession** and institutionalise research uptake culture and systems by mentoring the next generation of researchers (as well as future leaders) in the conduct and benefits of research uptake.

Key recommendations for Vice Chancellors

The pivotal role of university leadership

- The Vice Chancellor is a **key ambassador for research uptake**, and is ideally positioned to promote the University's strengths in research and research uptake to a national and international audience of leaders and partners.
- Research uptake can help to **heighten the visibility of university research**, opening the university to further opportunities for formal partnership, research utilisation and research commercialisation.
- The Vice Chancellor establishes and maintains **diverse, high-level relationships** within the HE sector and outside it, and can cement these relationships with a strong institutional research evidence profile.
- The University's **reputation as a research institution** is critical to its ability to build sustainable, mutually-beneficial partnerships.
- **Research management structures** need adequate support to ensure this reputation is strong – this depends on university leadership, strategy and dedicated resources.
- The Vice Chancellor can **mobilise funding, training and institutional support** for research uptake management and a research uptake culture at the University.
- **Existing resources can be coordinated** in support of research uptake – often, research uptake does not require expending significant and new resource to achieve results.
- Public relations, library, communications, research management, ICT, human resources and other offices and departments can **work jointly to embed good research uptake** policy and practice, under the guidance of university leaders.
- A **research uptake culture** should be a central component to the university's wider research strategy – university leaders can help to shape this culture through strategy and policy initiatives.
- **Monitoring and evaluation systems** are critical in understanding the influence of university research, and can help inform future strategy.

Good Practice Statements

High-priority recommendations supporting strategy, staff and research visibility

Strategy

- The **overall mission and strategy** of the University should reflect the need to produce research findings for wider use.
- The University should have a clear **research strategy** which explicitly recognises the importance of research for social, economic and development needs, and emphasises the need for research uptake systems.
- Policies should be in place to ensure that **ethical, conflict of interest and intellectual property** issues are sufficiently addressed in support of research uptake.
- The University should provide a **clear definition of Research Uptake**, which is aligned to its own operational context, to ensure consistency in understanding and practice amongst all stakeholders.
- A University wide **stakeholder map and partnership strategy** is a necessary foundation to ensure successful research uptake outcomes. This map and strategy should be articulated at the Departmental level.

Support for professional staff

- Clearly **designated professional staff** in the University should have responsibility for promoting research uptake amongst all research staff.
- **Research uptake should be professionalised** and trained communicators should be resident in the Research Management Office.
- Research (with uptake activities) should be **encouraged with incentives** and may be included as part of promotion guidelines for both researchers and management staff. Financial resources should be committed through human resource policies to support this activity.
- Staff with responsibility for research uptake should have access to, if not report directly to, the most **senior levels of management** in the University.
- Staff with research uptake responsibility should be at a sufficiently senior level to **communicate effectively with academic staff**.

Support for academic staff

- The University should maintain a publicly-accessible and active **database of research activity** and the research specialisations of academic staff.
- The University should provide support to academic staff in **approaching and negotiating agreements** with external funders of research.
- Research Uptake should be an integral component of research practice, rather than a stand-alone or additional activity. The notion of the whole research cycle is thus pertinent to building a **research uptake culture**.

- Academic staff should be actively encouraged to include **uptake activity in their research proposals** to external bodies, and potential users should be involved in project planning from an early stage.

Support for externally-facing activity

- A **range of mechanisms** should exist to bring the work of the University to external users, such as centrally produced newsletters, open days, research fairs, mailing lists and the university website.
- **Community networks and networks with policymakers** are important for contextualisation of research uptake and for the establishment of sustainable partnerships.