

Research Professionals definition and draft typology

About the project

The Research Professional Futures (RPF) project aims to reshape how research is delivered in the UK. It seeks to achieve this by focusing on Research Professionals (RPs) who are a diverse group of specialists whose skills are essential for delivering research. They operate in various areas, including research development, governance and systems, public engagement, knowledge exchange, commercialisation, and library services and include staff from central teams, faculties, and those embedded within research groups, as well as third space professionals and individuals with lived research experience from within or outside the sector. The RPF project will continue to refine this working definition of Research Professionals and the emerging typology of 11 categories of Research Professional activity is shown below.

The draft typology

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| 1. Research funding and research business development | 7. Research compliance, governance and regulatory requirements |
| 2. Research environment, culture and researcher development | 8. Managing research portfolios: applications, awards, projects and income |
| 3. Research systems, infrastructure, and management | 9. Research project, programme and centre management |
| 4. Library, collection and research information services | 10. Clinical and NHS-linked research management |
| 5. Research strategy, policy and planning | 11. Research communications and marketing |
| 6. Knowledge exchange, impact and commercialisation | |

Descriptions of typology areas

Proposed Area	Description
1. Research Funding and Research Business Development	Supporting the identification, development and acquisition of research funding. Roles work with researchers to shape competitive proposals, manage internal and external funding schemes, and build strategic relationships with funders, contributing to sustainable and strategically aligned research portfolios.
2. Research environment, culture and researcher development	Creating the conditions in which all those who contribute to research can thrive. Roles include doctoral administration, researcher development across career stages, and initiatives that promote connected, supportive, inclusive and responsible research cultures aligned with institutional priorities.
3. Research systems, infrastructure, and management	Being responsible for the systems and infrastructure that underpin research activity. Roles manage research information systems, repositories and data, ensuring research is discoverable, compliant and reusable, and supporting reporting, decision making and open research practices.
4. Library, collection and research information services	Supporting scholarly communications (including university presses), research data management, open access and open research (including open science practices), managing research collections, including collections in archives, galleries and museums, and providing expert information support that enables responsible research outputs.
5. Research strategy, policy and planning	Shaping and implementing institutional research strategy and policy, interpreting external policy environments, co-ordinating major returns such as REF, KEF and HESA, and supporting research intelligence, research evaluation, meta-science, evidence based planning and long-term strategic positioning.
6. Knowledge exchange, impact and commercialisation	Supporting the exchange of knowledge between research and wider society. Roles enable impact, public and civic engagement, partnerships, consultancy, enterprise and commercialisation, including IP, licensing and spin-outs, working across academic, public and private contexts.
7. Research compliance, governance and regulatory requirements	Ensuring research is conducted ethically, legally and responsibly. Roles support research ethics, governance, integrity, compliance and trusted research, embedding accountability and good research practice within institutions.
8. Managing research portfolios: applications, awards, projects and income	Managing research activity across the award lifecycle. Roles support pre-award and post-award processes, contracts, finance, costing and reporting, ensuring research funding is managed compliantly and efficiently.

9. Research project, programme and centre management	Leading the operational delivery of research investments including research projects, programmes, centres, doctoral training centres and institutes. These roles provide expertise in coordination, governance and risk management for complex initiatives, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities.
10. Clinical and NHS-linked research management	Working in clinical and NHS-linked contexts supporting clinical trials, governance and regulatory compliance, joint research office functions and partnerships, reflecting the specific requirements of clinical research environments.
11. Research communications and marketing	Communicating research activity, outcomes and value, translating research into accessible narratives for diverse audiences, supporting visibility, engagement and impact across institutional and external contexts.