

University of Reading Research and Innovation Strategy 2024-2030

The University of Reading's mission is to address global and societal challenges through excellent research with an open, interdisciplinary and collaborative approach. We are world leaders on environmental sustainability and a trusted independent voice on climate change. We aim to use the power of knowledge and challenge-led research to motivate change towards a more sustainable and fairer future.

Our strategic aims

Excellence is central to our research strategy. We support research of the highest quality in all our disciplinary areas, encouraging a culture of curiosity and innovation, which aims to make a positive difference to the lives of local and global communities. Our research underpins impactful partnerships as well as providing a creative and supportive environment and inclusive research culture for all of those who work at the University.

Our strategic objectives are:

- (i) to support and strengthen a positive and resilient research culture;
- (ii) to strengthen our culture of research excellence, impact and knowledge exchange by investing in skills and leadership development;
- (iii) to advance our world-class research to lead a transition to sustainable and fair future societies and;
- (iv) to build on our strategic partnerships and public engagement to enhance the visibility, accessibility and impact of our research, maximising its potential to make a difference in the real world.

Our research strategy for 2030 is a live document aligning with the four principles underpinning the University Strategic Plan: Community, Excellence, Engagement and Sustainability, and will be updated in line with the University strategy as appropriate.

Our research and innovation community

Our research and innovation community comprises a dynamic collective of academic and research staff, professional services staff and research students, united by an ambition to drive discovery, challenge convention and shape a better future.

Our research environment in 2030 will be characterised by creativity and bold thinking, where risk-taking and innovation are embraced, and collegiality, collaboration and continuous learning are embedded in our ethos. An inclusive, supportive and vibrant research culture will nurture

talent, value diverse perspectives and thrive on shared ownership, partnership and mutual respect.

To realise this, we will:

- Cultivate a culture of continuous learning to support research excellence for all staff engaged in research and innovation at all career stages;
- Break down barriers to entry and success in research, particularly for underrepresented groups by embedding fairness, transparency and inclusivity in every aspect of research support, recognition and reward;
- Fuel collaboration and knowledge exchange through peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, communities of practice, interdisciplinary partnerships and sharing of infrastructure and expertise;
- Champion academic freedom and freedom of speech by fostering a culture of trust, respect, open dialogue and bold, constructive debate;
- Celebrate and amplify achievements, ensuring that excellence in research is recognised, valued and rewarded;
- Lead the charge in open research, going beyond open access publishing to pioneer new models of accessibility, integrity and shared discovery.

Leading research excellence

Research excellence is driven by originality, rigour, and a commitment to tackling the world's most pressing challenges through ethical and forward-thinking inquiry. Our research creates new knowledge, fuels innovation and thrives on interdisciplinary collaboration. It shapes the future and engages both academic and public audiences. Research excellence at Reading is about more than achievement; it fosters talent development, builds sustainable global networks, and celebrates outstanding contributions. It is underpinned by our distinctive infrastructure, ranging from farms and laboratories to studios, museums and collections, and it is amplified by our four Research Themes Environment, Agriculture, Food and Health, Heritage and Creativity and Prosperity and Resilience, which drive transformative solutions for people, communities and the planet.

By 2030, we will be a global force in sustainability research, shaping agendas, pioneering new frontiers and driving disruptive innovation. We will push the boundaries in areas where our expertise leads the way, forging transformative collaborations and leveraging emerging technologies to address society's greatest challenges.

We will elevate our academic standing and global influence, significantly increasing the number of researchers who define the future of their fields. Our research teams will increasingly lead and deliver major externally funded research and innovation projects, strengthening the scale, scope and impact of our research and unlocking new opportunities through strategic partnerships and investment.

To achieve this vision, we will:

- Define and champion research excellence across all disciplines, ensuring shared understanding of its evolving nature;

- Celebrate the contribution of research that shapes knowledge, society and industry;
- Continuously review research infrastructure, harnessing new developments and disruptive technologies;
- Modernise digital research infrastructure, promote digital autonomy and develop sustainable technology solutions, collaborating with others in the sector and beyond;
- Develop research leaders and interdisciplinary teams, equipping them to address complex global challenges with bold, solutions-driven approaches;
- Foster ambitious, high-impact research, supporting transformative projects that generate lasting societal benefits;
- Break down barriers to research, streamlining processes, protecting research time where it delivers excellent research and impact, and removing obstacles to innovation;
- Uphold the highest standards of research integrity, ensuring our work is ethical, rigorous and globally respected.

Driving impact through engagement

Engagement is at the heart of how we connect and collaborate and is a dynamic force that fuels creativity and accelerates innovation, ensuring that our research delivers meaningful real-world change. By working closely with individuals, communities, businesses, policymakers, charities and public bodies- locally, nationally and globally- we co-create knowledge that is relevant, inclusive and transformative.

We are committed to forging equitable partnerships that amplify the reach and significance of our research. Our collaborations with leading institutions, including the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Met Office, the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts and the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, demonstrate our ambition to deliver research that matters today and shapes the future for generations to come.

By 2030, we will be recognised as a leader in research engagement, building partnerships that transcend disciplines, borders and sectors. We will be a proactive, forward-thinking University, driving research that is co-created with stakeholders, and shaped by innovative, inclusive methodologies. As a regional anchor institution, we will deepen our local impact while expanding our global reach, ensuring that our research delivers solutions where they are needed most. We will work with policymakers to influence change, empower communities through participatory research, and accelerate knowledge exchange that drives real-world progress.

To realise this vision, we will:

- Forge bold, strategic research partnerships at national and international levels, supporting ambitious, large scale projects that deliver global impact;
- Strengthen our role as a civic university, deepening local and regional engagement to drive social and economic benefits;
- Expand research commercialisation, translating our discoveries into real-world applications that fuel innovation and economic growth;
- Foster a culture of knowledge exchange, investing in skills development and collaboration between researchers and professional staff to maximise impact;

- Engage policymakers at every level, ensuring that our research informs and influences solutions to society's most pressing challenges;
- Empower communities through participatory research, placing people at the heart of discovery.

Driving global sustainability through research excellence

At the University of Reading, sustainability is at the core of our research mission. As a globally recognised leader in climate science, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and energy systems, our work informs policy, transforms industry practice and builds a more resilient future. We recognise that sustainability is as much a social and cultural challenge as an environmental one. The arts, humanities and social sciences play a pivotal role in shaping how societies understand, communicate and respond to climate change, while also exploring the ethical, historical and governance dimensions of environmental action.

By 2030, we will be the go-to institution for bold, interdisciplinary solutions to the planet's most urgent environmental and societal challenges. Our research will fuel breakthrough innovations and actively drive societal and economic transformation, moving beyond influence to direct action and ensuring real, lasting change where it is needed most.

To realise this vision, we will:

- Champion the protection and restoration of ecosystems, pioneering nature-based solutions that safeguard biodiversity and mitigate climate risks;
- Develop cutting-edge adaptations to protect public health and wellbeing, ensuring that communities worldwide can thrive in a rapidly changing environment;
- Accelerate the responsible use of digital innovation and AI in tackling sustainability challenges, from climate modelling to precision agriculture and smart energy systems;
- Strengthen interdisciplinary working to address the complexity of sustainability challenges, harnessing the agency of the arts, humanities and social sciences in co-creating and implementing solutions;
- Lead the way in shaping policy, industry and public action, driving transformative change at regional, national and international levels and co-developing actionable solutions;
- Drive the agenda for sustainable food systems which are resilient to global shocks and adapting to a rapidly changing climate by investing in our AgriFood Futures Strategy;
- Promote just transitions and social equity, ensuring that sustainability solutions are inclusive, fair and address global inequalities;
- Embed sustainability in our research culture, making it a guiding principle in how research is conducted, ensuring responsible use of resource and fostering ethical leadership in sustainability.

Professor Parveen Yaqoob, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation

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