Call for Open Research Champions 2022

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Would you like to be an Open Research Champion?

The University is seeking to recruit members of staff connected with research and research students (second year onwards) to become our second cohort of Open Research Champions.

This exciting initiative is being undertaken as part of the University's Open Research Action Plan. We are building a community of Champions who volunteer a small amount of their time to promote Open Research, provide information and support to peers and colleagues, and facilitate the adoption of open and reproducible research practices.

The Champions programme launched in 2021 with the recruitment of 19 Champions across 9 Schools. We will be developing this community through annual intakes of new Champions over the forthcoming years.

The essence of the Champion role is to model good Open Research practices, advocate for their adoption through peer networks, and signpost University support. There are also opportunities to become involved in projects and activities. Activities pursued by the first Champions cohort have included: running a University-wide survey to map Open Research knowledge, practices and needs; developing an open hardware community; promoting Open Access monographs; piloting electronic lab notebooks; organising a departmental panel discussion about Open Research; and running a research integrity workshop.

You will be a researcher, a member of staff connected with research, or a research student (second year onwards) working in any discipline. Research students must have the approval of their supervisor to apply. You will have an enthusiasm for Open Research – but you don't need to be an expert. You will be willing to volunteer a few hours a month to promote Open Research.

In return we offer you the opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills; to raise your public profile and extend your network, both within and outside the University; to inform University strategy and service development; and to obtain funding for Open Research activities. You will receive training and support from the Library's Research Engagement team.

Appointments of Open Research Champions will be made for a 12-month term from April/May 2022, and may be renewed by a further 12 months on request.

The call for Open Research Champions is open for applications until 12.00 noon on Friday 11th March 2022. There will be an information session on Thursday 17th February at 13.00-14.00, which anyone who is interested may attend. Places can be booked here.

If you wish to become an Open Research Champion please complete the application form. Please make sure you read this document before you apply.

If you have any questions or would like an informal chat, please contact Robert Darby, Research Data Manager (0118 378 6161). You are also welcome to contact any of our current Champions to find out more.

What is Open Research?

Open Research means making the process and outputs of research as **accessible**, **transparent**, **re-usable** and (where relevant) **reproducible** as possible. It includes the Open Access publication of peer-reviewed research, and the sharing of other outputs of research, which may include data, computer code, software, digital resources, preregistered study designs, methods/protocols, open hardware, and preprints.

Research practices that are 'open' improve research quality and integrity, re-use by others and value for money. They increase public trust in research and protect against fraud.

For more information about Open Research, consult the University's [Statement on Open Research](#). The web page [12 things you can do to be open](#) lists the key Open Research practices, while the [Open Research Handbook](#) provides a more detailed practical primer.

Open Research is a matter of importance to funders, institutions, and the publishers of research. Public funders, including the UKRI and the European Commission, have policies requiring Open Access to research outputs and the sharing of data and other materials necessary to validate research findings. This University, like any other research-active university, has policies on [Open Access](#) and [data sharing](#). Publishers, especially in the sciences, increasingly encourage, in some cases require, the sharing of data and code necessary to validated published results.

The University supports the principles and aims of Open Research. We encourage all researchers to be as open as they can, as early as they can.

Why is the University recruiting Open Research Champions?

The University's [Statement on Open Research](#) makes a commitment to 'increase the quality, integrity and accessibility of our research by supporting a growing culture and practice of Open Research'. This commitment is integrated into Objective 4 of the University's [Research and Innovation Strategy](#), and is enacted through the Committee on Open Research and Research Integrity (CORRI), chaired by Professor Parveen Yaqoob, PVC for Research and Innovation.

At the start of 2021 CORRI launched an Open Research Action Plan (download from Useful links [here](#)), a three-year programme of activities to stimulate the development of a culture of open and reproducible research. The Open Research Champions programme is funded under this Plan.

Academic research often fails to meet expectations of accessibility, transparency and reproducibility. For example:

- The outputs of publicly-funded research may not be immediately publicly accessible, being hidden behind publishers' paywalls;
- The data, computer code and detailed experimental methods that enable verification of findings, and that can have long-term re-use value for further research, may not be shared, or may be shared in substandard ways;

- Empirical research may fail the test of reproducibility: because of weaknesses in research design and methods, or a lack of published information about these, or failure to share supporting data and code.

You can read more about this in the section About Open Research of the Open Research Handbook.

Our ambition is to transform the research culture of the University towards one that is more open and reproducible, to mitigate as far as possible the negative effects described above, and to contribute in our own way to the creation of a more open global academic community.

We want to work with our research community to achieve this ambition, by equipping our researchers with the knowledge, skills and motivations to make more open choices in the way they work and communicate their findings.

Open Research Champions will be our allies in the research community, who will help us to seed and grow this culture by modelling open behaviour in their own activities, and by propagating knowledge and skills through their peer networks.

Who can become an Open Research Champion?

Any member of staff connected to research or research student (second year onwards) can become an Open Research Champion. Open Research Champions may be researchers or members of staff providing research-related support.

We are not looking for experts, and we do not expect you to be skilled in or knowledgeable about all areas of Open Research. We are looking for people who are enthused by the idea of Open Research or by particular open practices, who are keen to learn more, and who are willing to engage with their peers and colleagues. We believe the most effective way to champion Open Research is by transmitting practical knowledge and skills that others can integrate into their work.

You may have a special interest or passion, for example pre-registration, coding for reproducibility, publishing Open Access monographs, or promoting a data or experimental metadata standard. You may have data, equipment, software or programming skills you can share. You may want to attend an Open Research-themed conference, or buy in some relevant training for yourself and your peers. You may just want to find ways you and your colleagues can be more open and efficient in your research. These are all qualifications for becoming an Open Research Champion.

No particular knowledge or skills are needed to become an Open Research Champion, but we hope you have a willingness to learn and share. As part of your induction, we will ensure you have a basic understanding of Open Research principles and practices, and we will provide access to learning and development opportunities through regular Open Research Forum meetings, training courses, and information about external events.

What does being an Open Research Champion involve?

Your role as an Open Research Champion is to promote Open Research knowledge and practice within your School and/or through your professional networks. We have very few requirements, because we want you to develop the role in ways that are meaningful to you and your peers. The main requisite is an enthusiasm for Open Research!

As a minimum we ask that you:

- Commit to be an Open Research Champion for 12 months, from April/May 2022 (you may request a renewal of your appointment for 12 months at a time);
- Attend at least one of six Open Research Forum meetings that will be organised every year;
- Provide the Research Engagement team with a brief annual report on your past year's activities, and your plans for the future if you wish to continue as an Open Research Champion.

We would also like to publish your profile and contact details on our Open Research Champions website. We want our Champions to be visible, but you may opt not to have a public profile if you wish.

What you do beyond this is up to you. We encourage you to consider various additional ways in which you can promote Open Research, and we provide examples of things you can do below. You can also be inspired by some of the current Champions' projects.

Some of these activities may require funding or support, and Champions will be able to claim funds up to £500 per School per 12-month term. You may also request the support of the Library's Research Engagement team to help you organise and promote activities.

We suggest you volunteer up to one week of your time in any given 12-month period, i.e. no more than a few hours per month.

What are the benefits of becoming an Open Research Champion?

Gain new experience, knowledge and skills

- We will provide you with training and opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, which may be of direct benefit to your research and in your future career.
- You will have the opportunity to develop transferable professional skills in communication, presentation and training delivery.

Increase your public profile and expand your network

- We will provide you with a public profile on our Open Research Champions web page (unless you choose to opt out). See profiles of current Champions here.
- You will be recognised in your School as a local Open Research contact and voice for Open Research.
- You will become part of the Open Research Champions community, and have opportunities to make connections throughout the University.

- By participating in initiatives and external events you can engage with national and international networks of researchers and professionals working in different ways to advance Open Research.

Inform University strategy and service development

- You will be an advocate for the Open Research needs of your School, and will be able to communicate those needs to the University through the Open Research Forum.
- You will be able to propose items for discussion at meetings of the Committee on Open Research and Research Integrity (CORRI).
- You can apply to serve for 12 months as an *ex officio* member of CORRI. This will provide valuable experience of University committee work. (Only one place is available).

Obtain funding for activities

- You can claim up to £500 per School per 12 months to support Open Research activities. These funds could be used, for example, to cater a workshop, to cover the expenses of speakers or trainers at events you organise, or to attend an external training course or event.

What can you do as an Open Research Champion?

Examples of things you might do are provided below. We have grouped examples thematically, starting with some of the basic things, and moving on to activities that might require more organisation and effort.

Where there is more than one Open Research Champion in a School, we would expect you to co-ordinate your activities, and work together where it makes sense to do so. This can help you to spread the effort and ensure you are working efficiently to common goals.

We also encourage you to make connections with Open Research Champions in other Schools and to share your ideas, activities and materials: there may be things you can work on together, and other Champions may have ideas and materials that will be useful to you. Open Research Forum meetings offer an occasion for Champions to make these connections and share their experiences; and an Open Research Champions Team provides a space for you to communicate with other Champions and a shared materials repository.

The following list is not prescriptive or exhaustive. We encourage you to find the level of activity that is comfortable for you, and to do only what you find meaningful and rewarding.

You can also have a look at the list of Champions' projects for inspiration. Some of these are ongoing and may provide an opportunity to join in.

Remember: we suggest you volunteer up to one week of your time in any given 12-month period, i.e. no more than a few hours per month.

Be an Open Research role model

We do not expect you to do everything (and not all open practices will be relevant to you), but as a minimum you should seek to ensure that:

- any peer-reviewed publication of which you are an author is made Open Access, immediately on publication wherever possible;
- any data (and code where relevant) that are required to verify or replicate results are deposited in a suitable data repository for long-term preservation and access.

These are University policy requirements and the absolute **fundamentals of Open Research**. We recognise that you will not always have the say in these matters, but we hope that at least you will make the case to your fellow authors.

Be the voice of Open Research in your School

Without any great effort, you can use your everyday interactions to raise Open Research issues, highlight the Open Research angle on a subject, or simply signpost University policies and resources. For example, if a colleague mentions a planned publication, you might ask how they intend to share their data, and suggest they use the University's Research Data Archive or any other suitable data repository; if a colleague is unsure whether funds to pay for Open Access publication are available, you can point them to the Library's Open Access web page.

Opportunities to be voice of Open Research may arise quite naturally:

- in informal conversations with colleagues and students;
- in the day-to-day business of your research group or lab;
- when discussing research projects;
- in School and Department meetings.

In none of these scenarios do you necessarily have to go out of your way. But you could also take things to the next level by being more proactive. Some of the following suggestions may work best if there is more than one Champion in your School and you co-ordinate your efforts.

- Use your social media profile to promote Open Research messages and to highlight open outputs that you and your peers and colleagues produce, e.g. Open Access publications and open data, Open Source software code;
- Send occasional Open Research updates via School email channels, e.g. to highlight training and events of interest;
- Hold a regular Open Research surgery, for example, at a Department coffee break, where you can be available to advise peers and colleagues and point them to University research support services;
- Interview people in your School to find out about current practices and needs. You can make use of the Champions' 2021 Open Research Survey results to get the

basic picture, and develop it from there. You can use the information to inform your own activities as an Open Research Champion, and report your findings (see the next point);

- Represent the needs of your School to the University: you can convey local support requirements to the Research Engagement team, and propose items for discussion at meetings of CORRI;

- You can also apply to serve for 12 months as an *ex officio* member of CORRI (one place is available). You will be asked when you apply to become an Open Research Champion if you wish to be put forward for membership of CORRI;

- If there is a seminar series or journal club in your School or Department, schedule a session (or series of sessions) on an Open Research theme. The Research Engagement team can support or co-deliver sessions on a range of subjects, and the ReproducibiliTea Reading journal club maintains materials suitable for discussion on a variety of Open Research topics. If you don't have a local journal club – start one!

- Develop and share Open Research advocacy materials, e.g. posters, leaflets, practical guides;

- Submit an Open Research Case Study for publication by the University, describing how you have used and promoted open practices in your work.

Engage with the University Open Research network

We encourage you to be an active member of the University's Open Research Champion community. You can do this in several ways:

- Attend the meetings of the Open Research Forum, which will be held every two months. These are opportunities for you to make connections with fellow Open Research Champions, and to share ideas and experiences. You are welcome to present at or organise a meeting if there are particular topics you wish to discuss or see covered;

- Use the Open Research Team to access advocacy and training materials shared by other Champions and the Research Engagement team, and to share your own materials;

- Look for opportunities for collaboration with Open Research Champions in other Schools. For example, if you have a shared interest in a particular practice or software tool, you might co-host a workshop or develop information resources together;

- Participate in consultations on University initiatives to develop Open Research services, and engage peers and colleagues where relevant. As Open Research Champions you will have privileged access to information about University developments and an opportunity to provide input into services as they evolve.

Organise training

Organising training/workshop sessions in your School is a very powerful way to disseminate knowledge about Open Research or develop relevant skills. Training

activities might be ideal opportunities to collaborate with other Open Research Champions, or to draw on the support of the Research Engagement team, who can help organise and co-deliver sessions. Some examples of training that you could arrange are:

- programming skills for reproducible research;
- using a code repository platform such as GitHub or GitLab to manage code;
- use of data management/analysis software;
- how to pre-register a research study;
- how to publish your research as a preprint.

The Research Engagement team offers training on a variety of topics relating to scholarly communication, and members of the team will be happy to help you develop and deliver training tailored to the specific needs of your audience.

Develop your Open Research knowledge and skills

One of the best ways you can champion Open Research is by developing yourself and being a beacon for others. We will provide funds to enable you to do this where costs are involved. There are various ways you can develop your Open Research knowledge and skills:

- Attend external training courses. Just a few examples of organisations that may provide relevant training include the UK Reproducibility Network, the Software Sustainability Institute, Open Life Science, and the UK Data Service;
- The University offers training courses from the Carpentries initiative in essential programming and data science skills. You can attend a workshop and also train to be a certified instructor if you wish to be able to teach the workshops yourself. See the University's Research Software Engineering website for information;
- Attend conferences with an Open Research focus, such as the FORCE11 conference, the International Data Curation Conference, the RSE Conference, etc.

Any external event or training course for which costs are sought must have an Open Research focus, and should be attended in view of some benefit to the University, e.g. to deliver a paper on an Open Research theme, or to acquire knowledge and skills that will enhance your capacity to support Open Research and/or can be transmitted to peers and colleagues.

Projects

You might also want to lead or become involved in a project that has specific deliverables relevant to Open Research. For example:

- Pilot a tool to facilitate Open Research practices, e.g. trial an electronic lab notebook or protocol documentation tool with your lab;
- Some funding schemes exist to enable the delivery of projects with an Open Research focus. Examples of schemes that might fall within this scope are the

EPSRC Research Software Engineer Fellowships, and Software Sustainability Institute Fellowships.

Engage with an Open Research network outside the University

You do not have to confine your Open Research activities to the University. Open Research is by definition collaborative, and its communities are national and international in dimension. You will find allies and supporters in your disciplinary and other networks, and we encourage you to engage on wider stages, and to be part of broader movements of cultural change:

- Participate in community projects/initiatives with an Open Research focus, e.g. to develop data or metadata standards within your discipline, to create training materials, or to become a trained instructor in particular competencies. For example, the Research Data Alliance has various Working and Interest Groups convened around disciplinary requirements and general data-related topics; projects with a more general Open Research application include the Open Science MOOC and The Turing Way;
- Collaborate with members of your network outside the University to organise a workshop or event with an Open Research focus;
- If you are a member of a learned society or sit on the editorial board of a journal, propose Open Research policies, as relevant, e.g. the adoption of a policy requiring/encouraging the sharing of data and code if the journal does not have one, or the introduction of a registered reports article option. You could even propose converting a subscription journal to fully Open Access.

Reporting your activities

We encourage you to report your Open Research activities to us as they take place, and we provide an Open Research Activity Report form for this purpose. (This is distinct from the Annual Report form which all Champions are expected to complete, and which is used to provide a summary of the year's activities.) You do not have to report to us, but there are a number of reasons why you might want to do this:

- We want to celebrate your good work! If you let us know about it, we can showcase your activities across the University;
- It is a way for you to share your activities and any materials you produce, e.g. for advocacy and training, with the Open Research Champions community, so that other Champions can benefit from your experience;
- The information you provide tells us where and how Champions are making a difference, and helps us measure the impact of the work you are doing. This enables us to justify the cost of supporting the programme and to make the business case for continued funding. So ultimately this helps us to help you!

What support will be provided?

The Open Research Champion programme is managed by the Research Engagement team in the Library. You will have access to the support of this team, which will keep in regular contact with you to find out about your activities and needs, and to process requests for funds. The team may be able to assist with administrative and communication requirements associated with your activities, and to provide or co-deliver training. You will also benefit from access to the community of Open Research Champions, who provide mutual support and may be able to work with you on joint initiatives.

In particular, the following support is provided:

Publicity and introductions

The Research Engagement team will publicise new Open Research Champion appointments across the University. We can also introduce you in this role to relevant personnel, such as your Head of Department, your Research Division Lead (if you are a member of academic staff), or the Chair of the Research Staff Committee (if you are postdoctoral/contract staff).

Open Research Champions Team

You will be enrolled as a member of the University's community of Open Research Champions and their supporters in the University. You will be added to the Open Research Champions Team, which will provide a collaborative space where you can communicate with fellow members of the community, and a repository of training and advocacy materials.

Open Research Forum

The Open Research Forum is a meeting of the University's Open Research community that will take place every two months. It will provide an occasion for Open Research Champions and their supporters to meet together and discuss Open Research issues, challenges and successes. Forum meetings will consist of updates on recent activities and developments, and talks from Forum members and invited speakers. These events will also be the open to the University community and afford an opportunity for Champions to reach a wider audience.

You will be welcome to propose and contribute to themed sessions if there are particular issues you wish to discuss. We encourage Open Research Champions to talk about their activities and share their experiences with the community.

Support for training sessions

Through the Open Research Champions Team you will have access to a repository of shared training and advocacy materials that you can adapt to your local context and requirements. Members of the Research Engagement team may be able to co-develop and co-deliver training courses tailored to local requirements.

We encourage you to share any training and advocacy materials you develop through the Team, so that other Champions can make use of them.

Open Research mailing list

You will be enrolled in the Open Research mailing list (open-research@reading.ac.uk) when you become a Champion. Any member of the University can join the list, which is used to share used to share Open Research-related news and information.

How can you become an Open Research Champion?

To become an Open Research Champion, simply complete this application form. The deadline for receipt of applications is 12.00 on Friday 11th March. We will respond to all applications to join the Open Research Champions programme shortly after this date. All Open Research Champion appointments will be approved by the Head of School or Function. Appointments will be effective for 12 months from April/May 2022.

If you would like an informal discussion about the Open Research Champions programme, please contact Robert Darby, Research Data Manager at r.m.darby@reading.ac.uk / 0118 378 6161.