

# The Lab for Academic Culture

## 1. Background

The 'Lab for Academic Culture' was established at the University of Glasgow in 2020. It aimed to enhance academic research and teaching culture by implementing local initiatives and shaping sector policies, to bring expertise together to devise, implement and monitor projects to advance culture, and to create a forum through which to shape new projects with the wider sector. From its conception, a major focus of the 'The Lab', was on Research Culture, whilst recognising the importance of positioning this conversation within the wider remit of Academic Culture and the implementation of the University strategy. 'The Lab' is externally recognised as having played an important role in establishing the University of Glasgow as a leader in Research Culture development. In 2022/23 it provided a critical steer to the establishment of the Research Culture Team and the priority workstreams for delivery of the current Research Culture Action Plan.

## 2. Rationale for Evolution

It has been agreed that for 2024 The Lab will retain a focus on Research Culture via the five University of Glasgow research Culture priorities: Open Research, Research Integrity, Research Recognition, Career Development, and Collegiality, and will additionally provide:

- (1) Expert steer in the maintenance, development and enhancement of positive research culture by convening a team of experts who work in partnership to provide guidance on the **Research Culture Action Plan, in accordance with the Research Strategy**.
- (2) Increased connectivity and complementarity with **other key strategies under the University Strategy**, policies, and processes (for example: Promotion Pay and Reward; EDI; Wellbeing; Learning & Teaching)
- (3) Connectivity for **strategic culture projects** led by central teams, and by teams and individuals across the Colleges.
- (4) A **clear and consolidated identity** for Culture enhancement work at Glasgow.

The figure below, represents the strategic position of The Lab within the University of Glasgow.



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There are several external and internal drivers for the activities of The Lab, as detailed below:

- (a) There has been growing close attention to 'Research Culture' within HEIs in the UK with several new government papers, policy documents, funder strategies, and potential governance frameworks emerging for sector consultation, including for example, the potential for greater weighting for People, Culture and Environment in REF 2028, an open UUK (the governing body for the Researcher Development Concordat) open house on the 'Fairness of Employment' for Research Staff, consultation on the 'New Deal for PGR', and a UKRI/Vitae collaboration seeking to create a sector-wide framework for good practice in developing Research/Academic Cultures. We want to take a proactive and coordinated effort in our response to these.
- (b) At the same time Research and the wider discussion on Academic Culture is a contested concept within HE policy and practice discourse, and there are a number of live conversations through which we want to be clear about our strategic position, priorities and responsibility as a university.
- (c) We wish to create new opportunities to disseminate our successes, to collaborate at sector level, and to work in an open way, inviting other universities to take part in initiatives we are hosting, or have piloted. Options, for example, include hosting a seminar series, conference, panel debate, or taking a train-the-trainer approach. The Lab would act as a hub for others to find resources and opportunities to develop and share institutional approaches to developing Research/Academic Culture.
- (d) There has been an increase in funding opportunities related to Research Culture and the university must be in a proactive position to respond to future funding calls. Additionally, the success of an increasing number of research funding opportunities requires details of the university's approach and investment in Research/Academic Culture, and we want to stay ahead of how the funders understand excellence in this area of work.
- (e) We have received Institutional Research Culture funding from the Wellcome Trust and whilst this has been purposefully designed to be closely aligned to the University of Glasgow Research Culture Priorities it does not sit under the established Research Culture Action Plan. We must create a structure of overarching Research Culture governance for externally funded strategic projects including future projects.
- (f) New investment in resourcing of the university's Research Culture work means that we are now working more collaboratively across different areas of the institution including with the Colleges and with University Services, under a large range of overlapping strategies. It is now timely that we take the opportunity to formalise those partnerships through a consolidated structure.

### 3. Terms of Reference for the Lab for Academic Culture

#### **(a) The remit and purpose of the Lab falls under the following position statements:**

- The Lab's focus is the maintenance, development and enhancement of positive academic cultures in which everyone can thrive.
- Whilst acting as an instrument for the delivery of the Research Strategy the Lab will service many relevant strategies of the university. Acting overall under the University strategy: World Changers Together.
- The Lab is a space for creativity, collaboration, and the testing and piloting of new ideas and initiatives.
- The Lab houses recognisable and trusted expertise drawn from a number of specialisms and areas of the university.
- The Lab convenes a team of experts in response to sector consultations, and developments.
- The Lab is a point of connection to the latest Research/Academic Culture developments in the sector.
- The Lab responds to relevant external funding opportunities and provides a connecting structure for externally funded strategic projects.

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- The Lab provides a connecting structure for relevant internal projects across University Services and strategies.
- The Lab provides a structure which supports, connects and champions College-level Research/Academic Culture initiatives.
- The Lab provides ongoing reflective critique of University of Glasgow Research/Academic Cultures, through a range of evaluation mechanisms.
- The Lab works in tandem with the Research Culture Commons – a university wide network for all Research Staff, Postgraduate Researchers, Academic Staff, Technicians and Research Professional Staff.
- The Lab has an advisory role in the establishment of the university's Research Culture Priorities, and Action Plan.
- The Lab is consulted and informed on delivery of the Research Culture Action Plan.
- The Lab is not responsible or accountable for delivery of the Research Culture Action Plan.
- The Lab supports the University of Glasgow to establish excellence in Research/Academic Culture.
- The Lab supports the University of Glasgow to establish a leading presence in Research/Academic Culture development.

### **(b) The Activities of The Lab**

The Lab will act via:

- **Lab Meetings:** the Lab is convened quarterly to give input and feedback into an agenda which reflects emerging Research/Academic Culture priorities for the university.
- **Lab Response:** the group is activated to collaboratively respond to sector consultations, and new developments to support UofG to take an aligned position.
- **Horizon Scanning:** the group is asked to relay professional insights of interest to the Lab for discussion.
- **External Reputation:** the group is asked to represent the interests of the Lab/UofG in external networks and conversations.

### **(c) The Lab is led by Co-Directors Professor Chris Pearce and Dr Kay Guccione and comprises the following membership:**

- VP Research and Knowledge Exchange
- Head of Research Culture and Researcher Development
- Executive Director of Research Services
- Academic Lead for Inclusive Research Practice
- Academic Lead for Good Research Practice
- A Dean of Research (1-year term)
- A Dean of Graduate Studies (1-year term)
- Challenge Programmes Director
- Research Culture Manager
- Research Enhancement Manager
- Research Integrity Manager
- Research Information Manager (Lead for Open Research)
- Wellcome Institutional Research Culture Project Manager
- VP Learning and Teaching
- Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- People & Organisational Development Business Partner (Promotion, and PDR)
- Chair of the Research Professional Staff Network
- Two Research Staff Representatives (1-year term)
- Two PGR Representatives (1-year term)
- 3 External Advisors (2-year term)
- Plus, invited members as required to serve the Lab's agenda

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**Operation of the Lab for Academic Culture**

- Formal meetings will normally be held four times a year, anticipated in February, May, September and December. Where smaller group meetings are required, these will be agreed in advance.
- Meetings will be on campus, or on Zoom. In the event that attendance at Lab meetings in person is not possible, this should be communicated in advance.
- Deputies and invited guests will be permitted with prior approval by the Co-Directors.
- The Research Culture Manager will act as Secretary to record, file, collate, circulate and track minutes and actions and relevant papers.
- Members should play a full and active role in the work of the Lab fulfilling their role responsibly and at all times, acting in good faith and in the best interests of the Lab and university colleagues.
- Members should declare any personal or business interest that may influence their judgement or may be perceived as such (by a reasonable member of the public). This should include, as a minimum, personal direct and indirect pecuniary interests. In case of doubt, the member should seek counsel from the Co-Directors as to whether a potential conflict should be declared. A Conflict Register will be maintained.
- The business of the Lab is deemed confidential and should not be disclosed to third parties without express permission.