

# Terms of reference for MPLS Research Staff Forum & appointment of Co-Chairs

## Terms of Reference

MPLS Research Staff Forum (RSF) was set up in 2016.

- It aims to represent the needs of research staff at a divisional level.
- It is a committee that meets termly.
- It discusses issues raised from a departmental level.
- It contributes to debates on institutional and external research staff initiatives such as eligibility to training, or the drafts of the Concordat.
- It makes policy proposals to the Research Staff Consultative Group, MPLS ECR Forum and Divisional Board.
- It shares good practice in establishing and running research staff societies at a departmental level.
- It acts as a conduit of information from division to research staff in departments.

The committee aims to have at least two research staff representatives from each department in the division. One of the co-chairs of MPLS RSF sits on the Divisional Board, the governing body of the division. Both co-chairs sit on the Research Staff Consultative Group of the University. Issues discussed at meetings of MPLS RSF can then be raised at divisional and institutional levels. The MPLS Research Culture Facilitator supports MPLS RSF by acting as a secretary to the committee, providing continuity, induction for new members and giving briefings on specific subjects. Two representatives from MPLS RSF (usually the co-chairs) sit on the MPLS ECR Forum.

## Background

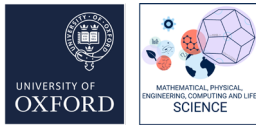
The University Advocate for Research Staff (henceforth 'Advocate') has proposed an approach for better representation and consideration of the issues relating to research staff involving the creation of three committees that meet termly, which has been approved by both the Research and Innovation Committee (RIC) and Personnel Committee (PC). It is intended that this approach will result in a uniform approach for considering research staff issues across the Collegiate University, and that activities will be reported to both RIC and PC.

**The Research Staff Steering Committee (RSSC)** has responsibility for agreeing and coordinating strategy and planning to drive the agenda on enhancing opportunities for research staff. It includes academic representatives from each of the four divisions and from the Conference of Colleges (the College Advocate), directors of each of the key central service departments, and the chairs of the two other committees.

**The Research Staff Working Group (RSWG)** is an executive group responsible for leadership, management and implementation of research staff initiatives.

**The Research Staff Consultation Group (RSCG)** provides a forum for research staff to identify and prioritise themes and measures, which will advise and inform the strategy, initiatives and priorities of RSWG and RSSC.

At the divisional level MPLS has the **Early Career Research Forum (ECRF)** comprised of the **Divisional Associate Head for People**, the two co-chairs of **MPLS Research Staff Forum (MPLS RSF)** and advocates (permanent academic staff) from each department supported by MPLS administration staff most notably the **Research Staff Development Manager**. To make these new



posts as representative and transparent as possible to the division, the following selection process has been agreed

## Selection process principles

- Research staff should have oversight and control of selecting their representatives and should be involved in each stage of the selection process.
- A clear and transparent selection process is co-created between divisional research staff and key divisional staff members who support research staff.
- The selection process follows the University's policies on Equality and Diversity (<https://edu.ox.ac.uk/equality-policy>). Research staff are not only the largest staff group at the University, but also the most diverse group. Applications from research staff from under-represented groups should be strongly encouraged.
- A process that allows any member of research staff to be selected irrespective of time at Oxford.
- The process is communicated as widely as possible to all research staff using a number of communication channels e.g., webpages, email lists.
- Selected Co-Chairs should have legitimacy as true 'representatives' whose voices are heard.

## Eligibility

To be eligible to apply to be a Co-Chair you need to be a current MPLS 'researcher'. University policy is to align with the definition of 'researcher' as stated in The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Sept, 2019). Where the Concordat allows for flexibility, the relevant faculty/department shall determine whether individual circumstances shall be deemed to meet the criteria. The Concordat states:

*Researchers are defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed specifically for this purpose by a higher education institution or research institute. Within this group, it is recognised that these staff often have different contract types, levels of training, experience and responsibility, as well as different career expectations and intentions. Disciplinary and institutional context can also mean a broad range of job titles fall within this definition.*

## Selection process

- Advertise role along with the representative structure through both bottom up and top-down communication. This will utilise the network developed by the ECRF direct to research staff while gaining legitimacy from departments/division with the aim of reaching the majority of eligible people.
- Applicants should have one colleague who endorses their application (supporter).
- Each candidate will be asked for a short statement of interest (SOI 200-300 words) with any past committee or representative experience. The candidates will be asked to respond in writing to 3-4 additional open questions set by the election administrators (current **MPLS RSS co-chairs** and the **MPLS Research Culture Facilitator**) to help the voters see candidate's position on key issues which will be relevant in the following 12 months.
- The Statement of Interests (SOI) and question responses will be available to view by research staff members and colleagues who are part of the voting and administration of the selection process. The election is to be held online using a secure system.
- If there are only two candidates applying for the RSF Co-Chair's role, they will be selected by default.
- If there are more than two candidates, there will be a secret ballot and the candidates who come first and second will be selected.

In the unfortunate event that the election administrators find less than two suitable candidates, the departmental advocates will be approached to actively encourage research staff members known to them as capable.