OXFORD
BROOKES
UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH POLICY

1. **Introduction**

1.1 Oxford Brookes University recognises that research forms a necessary and vital part of its function as a University. Through its policies and practices, it seeks to encourage the pursuit of excellence in the research that is undertaken. The University and its Schools will support areas which demonstrate or hold the promise of showing excellence.

1.2 The University recognises the importance of research for assisting in:

- achieving the national and international goals of enhancing the quality of life and enhancing wealth creating potential;
- promoting an academic and intellectual ethos within the institution;
- ensuring relevance and vigour in the courses, and enthusiasm among the staff in the institution;
- attracting and retaining staff of the highest calibre;
- promoting and supporting excellence in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and providing a platform for future development of courses at these levels;
- promoting and developing excellence in postgraduate study;
- enhancing the reputation of the institution, its Schools and the staff therein;
- enhancing the level of external income to the University;
- promoting relations with local, national and international partners, including industry, business, commerce, governmental organisations, professional bodies, educational establishments, charities and the community in general.

2. **Policies**

2.1 The University attaches considerable importance to research for the reasons given in paragraph 1. All Schools should have some opportunity to undertake research, although the level of support for, and expectation of, Schools may vary selectively over time and between Schools.

2.2 Within the context of selective support, the University believes that the focus of decision-making about the balance of research and other activities for a School, its disciplines and its staff should lie within the Schools. It is here that knowledge of available resources and expertise is most detailed and where strategic and operational objectives are set.

2.3 The University and its constituent Schools consider that excellence in research, teaching, consultancy, professional practice, course development and management merit parity of esteem.

2.4 It is recognised that individual staff will be suited to different parts of this range of activities and therefore the University does not expect that all staff will be engaged in research as defined in paragraph 3; although it does expect that all staff will be engaged in scholarship.

2.5   The University has the ultimate responsibility for taking an overview of its research portfolio and, through the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee and the strategic planning process, will, where appropriate, negotiate with Schools on the balance of their activities. The University will set out its priorities as they relate to research through the University Corporate Plan, which will be monitored through the Annual Operating Statement.

2.6   The University will encourage Schools to be selective in the areas of research that they pursue, harnessing and developing the talents of the researchers available to them in the most effective and productive way. Schools will be expected to produce updated strategic plans annually; to monitor the activities contained therein; and to submit a copy of these plans to the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee annually. Schools should also make public their criteria for deciding how individual staff will balance their time between research, teaching, and other activities. All academic staff, including those on fractional contracts, should have the opportunity to be judged against these criteria.

2.7   The University will both encourage and, where possible, facilitate Schools and researchers to seek innovative opportunities and areas for research both within and between traditional disciplines.

2.8   The University recognises that research requires resources including adequate time and space. Having regard to the resources available and within the context of the overall priorities and selectivity policies agreed by it, the University will provide the Schools with enabling resources, and will monitor Schools in the use of these resources. In turn, Schools are in the best position to advise on how best to distribute their available resources in order that the aims given here are realised to the best and most efficient effect.

2.9   The University recognises that the aims given cannot be shown to be achieved unless quality research output appears in the public domain or, in the case of sensitive material, as confidential output. It is expected that such output will be the normal result of research.

2.10   The University commits itself to providing effective, efficient and equitable support for researchers, via the infrastructure, on such matters as holding and publicising data on funding sources and research opportunities, advising on research bids, publicising the University's research successes, advising on research expenditure, administering the enrolment and progress of research students, publicising and co-ordinating internal and external policy matters related to research, and performing a central research co-ordination role in general.

2.11   Through School Research Committees and the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee, the University will monitor the implementation of this policy. It will also review research performance, and the use of research resources through the Research Degrees Board, the progress of research students. Performance Indicators will be published against which progress can be measured, and an annual report on these matters will be produced.

2.12   Ethics approval of research projects and monitoring of ethical practice in research will be carried out through Schools and the University Research Ethics Committee, on behalf of the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee. A report from the University Research Ethics Committee on its activities will be submitted annually to Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee. (For further guidance see Research Ethics Code of Practice)

3   **Definitions**

3.1   The University recognises that 'research' includes a number of activities which share the property of being innovative:

- basic research, which is experimental or theoretical and aims at acquiring new knowledge or offering new interpretations;
- strategic research which is potentially applied but is in an area where the eventual applications are not clearly specifiable at the time;
- applied research which is work undertaken to acquire new knowledge and is directly aimed at practical and applicable objectives;
- near-market research which is innovative work aimed at generating or partially generating a specific product, artefact or idea for the commercial market;
- creative work, particularly in the arts and allied subjects;
- advanced pedagogic research of the type acceptable in national assessment exercises, including innovative research into teaching methodology and development of the curriculum.

3.2   It is recognised that a continuum exists between these forms of research, and that all are equally commendable activities in pursuit of the University's research aims. However, it is also recognised that the availability of external funding for research may have the effect of giving preference to certain of these activities.

3.3   The University also recognises that other related activities are either required or are equally desirable and valid in a School or staff portfolio even though these are excluded from the strict definition of research:

- consultancy mainly aimed at revenue generation through standard testing or standard application of methods;
- substantive consultancy which uses research expertise (not simply routine methods or tests) on a contractual basis in order to achieve a specific contracted goal;
- scholarship whose purpose is to update staff in subject developments, which in any case is required of all staff;
- necessary or voluntary professional practice which is non-innovative;
- routine curriculum updating and routine updating of teaching methods, both of which are required of all teaching staff.

Approved by the Research and Consultancy Committee on 4 February 2003 (renamed the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee in January 2004) and the Academic Board on 19 March 2003.

For further information, please contact the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) or the Director of the Research and Business Development Office.