

# Academic Engagement and Research Roadmap

March 2017

**OGL**

© Crown copyright 2017

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence) or email [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available for download at [nationalarchives.gov.uk](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk).

# Contents

## **1. Background and context**

1.1 An Academic Engagement and Research Roadmap

1.2 The National Archives: an Independent Research Organisation

1.3 Academic Scoping Study: main findings and recommendations

## **2. Reinvigorating our academic engagement and research**

2.1 What is academic engagement?

2.2 What is required for effective academic engagement?

2.3 Implementation: the roadmap

## **3. Summary and conclusion**

# 1. Background and context

## 1.1 An Academic Engagement and Research Roadmap

This roadmap is the result of collective discussions held across The National Archives and with members of the academic community in reaction to the findings and recommendations of the Academic Scoping Study delivered in April 2016. The roadmap outlines a series of tangible steps that will be undertaken in the short, medium, and long term to reinvigorate our engagement with the academic community, to implement the recommendations of the Academic Scoping Study, and to deliver on the ambitions of *Archives Inspire* up to 2019 and beyond. It was approved by The National Archives Board on 24 October 2016.

This roadmap aims to support our ambition, articulated in *Archives Inspire*, to:

- Advance knowledge through exemplary academic liaison and outstanding interdisciplinary research.

By working to:

- Expand our national and international reputation for pioneering research and collections management in line with our status as an Independent Research Organisation.
- Enhance our current research reputation to develop funding success.
- Establish a renowned research centre to coordinate and galvanise our long-term research programme.
- Respond to the changing needs of the academic and research sector.

*Archives Inspire* recognises that for these things to be achieved, we need to reinvigorate our approach to research and academic engagement. The roadmap

therefore explores the creation, completion, and dissemination of research and its communication outside The National Archives. It examines what internal changes are required to enable us to deliver on the ambitions of *Archives Inspire*, and what impact these changes will have on our external engagement. Its outcomes should support research wherever it is conducted within the organisation, and should enable its effective dissemination across all of our audiences whether academic, public, government, or the archives sector. It will enable us to support our academic audience in the research they undertake while working at The National Archives and lay the foundations for new academic partnerships.

## **1.2 The National Archives: Independent Research Organisation**

The National Archives is the official archive of the UK Government and the national archive for England and Wales. It preserves, protects, and provides access to over 1,000 years of history and its collections stretch from medieval parchments to contemporary digital records. It is the official publisher of the UK government and is the leadership body for the archives sector in England, working with more than 2,500 archives of all shapes and sizes.

The National Archives has a strong record and reputation for academic excellence in disciplines ranging from heritage science and digital humanities to information management, legal informatics, and education. We are recognised as an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) by the UK Research Councils and hold Knowledge Base status with the Technology Strategy Board. Our staff regularly contribute to peer-reviewed journals, speak at academic conferences, and actively participate in scholarly teaching. Our established academic programmes provide opportunities for research students to have embedded experiences within the life of the organisation, whether through Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships (CDPs), Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) placements, or undergraduate student placements. We have an established and recognised programme of postgraduate

training in archival skills, and regularly contribute to training and skills workshops in a variety of fields.

The range and variety of our academic programmes and the importance of the services we offer to the academic community are reflected within our four-year business plan, *Archives Inspire 2015-2019*.

*Archives Inspire* recognises the academic community as one of The National Archives' four key audiences, alongside the public, government, and the wider archives sector. It recognises the need for The National Archives to continually refine our offer to our academic audience, and to reinvigorate our research and academic engagement in order to continually build our reputation for pioneering interdisciplinary research. This is especially important as all of The National Archives' audiences are facing new opportunities and challenges posed by digital technology, which has created the need for a comprehensive programme of digital research as embodied by The National Archives' Digital Strategy and Digital Research Roadmap.<sup>1</sup>

Our current relationship with our academic audience was explored through the Academic Scoping Study. This sought to establish The National Archives' position within the research landscape, and to interrogate our reputation amongst the academic community.

### **1.3 Academic Scoping Study**

The results of the Academic Scoping Study revealed that The National Archives is well established amongst academics, researchers, and scholars as a place to conduct research. We have an excellent reputation for service provision and are regarded as a welcoming place to study. Our researcher training, particularly for postgraduates, is held in high esteem and our Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Archives Digital Strategy: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/the-national-archives-digital-strategy-2017-19.pdf>.

have provided a valuable means of embedding members of the research student community within the life of the organisation. Although the historical community is prominent amongst our academic user base, other disciplines are also present, including legal scholars, educationalists, heritage scientists, those working within the digital fields, and archive and information professionals. Although the scoping study praised The National Archives for its service provision, it also highlighted that in terms of its own research and scholarship, and wider academic engagement, our reputation is less certain. It highlighted that we have limited visibility within the academic and research communities for the research we conduct ourselves, that we're often not considered as a pertinent academic partner, and that some of our processes are challenging to external partners.<sup>2</sup>

The Academic Scoping Study made six overarching recommendations and conclusions, which were accepted by The National Archives' Executive Board in March 2016.

---

<sup>2</sup> DJS Research, Academic Scoping Study, March 2016, pp. 16-18, 23-27.

## 2. Reinvigorating our Academic Engagement and Research

This roadmap sets out how The National Archives can enhance its engagement with its academic audience, how this relates to the research it conducts, and what internal and external changes can be made to better streamline this engagement.

### 2.1 What is academic engagement?

Academic engagement is the process of communication with the academic and research communities in order to foster mutual understanding; to encourage collaboration and partnership; and to ensure The National Archives' offer is comprehensive, relevant, and reflective of academic and researcher needs. It seeks to draw the academic community into Kew as users, partners, and advocates; to develop dynamic partnerships with other research and academic institutions to increase our research capacity; and to clearly showcase The National Archives as a centre of innovative and interdisciplinary research in order to enhance our reputation and funding success.

### 2.2 What is required for effective academic engagement?

This roadmap proposes six practical things that are required to 'advance knowledge through exemplary academic liaison and outstanding interdisciplinary research'.

In order to deliver on the ambition of *Archives Inspire*, The National Archives will:

1. **Clearly articulate the role of research:** we will clearly articulate the purpose that research serves within The National Archives, why we do this, and how it relates to our core business.

2. **Share research:** we will work collectively as an organisation to identify new opportunities, to challenge ways of working, and to work across disciplinary boundaries. We will revise our internal practices for sharing research and identifying opportunities for interdisciplinary initiatives.
3. **Support research:** we will build a support structure for staff to conduct research, in support of key business aims, and to raise their research profiles, both individually and collectively. We will ensure that we are consistent in our approaches and processes, and that they are efficient and visible to current and prospective partners.
4. **Showcase research:** we will promote our research more effectively externally to raise our profile and reputation. We will ensure that we are effective in the communication of our offer to individual academics, partners, and stakeholders.
5. **Facilitate collaboration:** we will work in collaboration with other organisations in order to enhance our research capacity, raise our profile, and in response to prevailing research drivers which place a premium on partnership. We will proactively develop new strategic partnerships with key stakeholders that enhance our research capacity for pioneering interdisciplinary research, whilst building on and strengthening our existing relationships.
6. **Resource research:** we will resource the research process to build momentum and demonstrate our corporate commitment to research.



## 2.3 Implementation: The roadmap

This section consists of a set of action plans for the next ten years (2016-2026), divided between the six delivery areas, each of which aligns with one or more of the recommendations given above.

We need to be.....	We will do this by.....	To achieve this we will.....
<p><b>Clear</b></p>	<p><b>Clearly articulating the role of research</b></p> <p>We will clearly articulate the purpose that research serves within The National Archives, why we do this, and how it supports and enhances our core business.</p>	<p><b>RESEARCH STRATEGY:</b> we will publish and implement The National Archives' <i>Research Strategy</i>.</p> <p><b>DEFINITION:</b> we will produce a definition of what research means to us, how it supports our core mission and business, and how it relates to the wider academic community and our other audiences.</p> <p><b>SHOWCASE EXPERTISE:</b> we will be more effective in showcasing the research expertise contained across The National Archives and communicate this externally via our website, publications, and events.</p> <p><b>STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:</b> we will engage with an increasingly diverse range of external stakeholders within the academic and research communities, and seek to deepen our working relationship with existing partners in support of our mission and mutual interests.</p> <p><b>RESEARCH PRIORITIES:</b> we will publish a renewed set of research priorities, reflecting the diversity of research conducted across the organisation and the opportunities that exist to develop interdisciplinary approaches.</p>

<p><b>Collegiate</b></p>	<p><b>Sharing research</b></p> <p>We will revise our internal practices for sharing research and identifying research expertise.</p>	<p><b>SHARING:</b> we will continually encourage the sharing of ideas between colleagues underpinned by a culture of openness and inquisitiveness, and proactively look for opportunities for interdisciplinary research initiatives between specialisms contained within The National Archives.</p> <p><b>CULTURE:</b> we will create flexible and informal means of sharing research ideas and initiatives across the organisation to allow for creativity and experimentation.</p> <p><b>RESEARCH MAPPING:</b> we will create a comprehensive overview of the research expertise held across the organisation and look to communicate this more effectively externally.</p> <p><b>SUPPORTING SKILLS:</b> we will harness the experience of research-active colleagues, and members of the academic community, to support colleagues less familiar with leading research initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Consistent</b></p>	<p><b>Supporting research</b></p> <p>We will build a support structure for staff to conduct research, in support of key business aims, and to raise their research profile, both individually and collectively.</p>	<p><b>PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP SCHEME:</b> we will continue to develop a professional fellowship scheme to enable staff from The National Archives to have an embedded experience within another research-active organisation.</p> <p><b>RESEARCH TRAINING:</b> we will harness expertise from both inside and outside of The National Archives to support staff through the research process and share experience between colleagues.</p> <p><b>STAFF RESEARCH POLICY:</b> we will create and publish a research policy, which outlines the role of research within the organisation, the ability of staff to conduct research, and the governance mechanisms required to oversee this.</p>

		<p><b>SABBATICAL SCHEME:</b> we will create an internal sabbatical scheme for staff to enable and support concentrated periods for directed research within The National Archives' newly-established 'research hub'.</p>
<p><b>Coherent and confident</b></p>	<p><b>Showcasing research</b></p> <p>We will promote our research more effectively externally to raise our profile and reputation.</p>	<p><b>COMMUNICATIONS:</b> we will streamline our communications with the academic and research communities, ensuring that our messaging is clear, concise and delivered through the most pertinent channels to reach its intended audience.</p> <p><b>ACADEMIC EVENTS STRATEGY:</b> we will develop a pioneering series of events in partnership with the academic community in order to showcase research being conducted across The National Archives, and engage in interdisciplinary dialogue and debate.</p> <p><b>WEBPAGE REVISION:</b> we will more effectively showcase the research being conducted across The National Archives, the diversity of our academic programmes, and the potential for academic partnerships through the revision of our Research and Scholarship webpages.</p> <p><b>WIDER ENGAGEMENT:</b> we will diversify the delivery of our academic programmes and initiatives geographically. We will look to use our strategic relations with other national bodies to provide greater reach and visibility for our academic events and training.</p> <p><b>BENCHMARKING:</b> we will monitor our relationship with, and reputation amongst, our academic audience through regular audience surveys. The results of the Academic Scoping Study will be used as a baseline for this research.</p> <p><b>PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:</b> we will look for opportunities to develop commercial relations with members of our academic audience through offering subscriptions to our existing Digital Download Resources and</p>

		<p>emerging products and services.</p> <p>RESEARCH REPORT: we will look to establish a research report to collate and showcase research undertaken across the organisation and the academic partnerships that have been developed.</p>
<b>Collaborative</b>	<p><b>Facilitating collaboration</b></p> <p>We will work in collaboration with other organisations in order to enhance our research capacity, raise our profile, and in response to prevailing research drivers which place a premium on partnership.</p>	<p>EXTEND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES: we will look for new opportunities to expand the reach of our academic programmes through DTP2, expand our Collaborative Doctoral Schemes, and further develop our student placement scheme.</p> <p>RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP SCHEME: we will undertake a feasibility study to examine the establishment of a Research Fellowship scheme to embed external researchers within the life of The National Archives.</p> <p>HONORARY RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP: we will examine the creation of an Honorary Research Fellowship scheme as an acknowledgement of former members of staff and members of the academic community who have made a significant contribution to the life and work of The National Archives.</p> <p>PARTNERSHIP PROSPECTUS: we will create a means of concisely and coherently showcasing the potential of The National Archives as an academic partner to universities, Doctoral Training Partnerships, and other Independent Research Organisations through the creation of a partnership prospectus.</p> <p>ARCHIVES SECTOR: we will look to diversify the range and variety of academic partnerships The National Archives is engaged with and how these can strengthen our leadership of the wider archives sector. We will look to establish ourselves as a conduit of collaboration between academics, other archives, and ourselves. This will be through events,</p>

		<p>programmes, and considering the wider sector benefit of the research applications we develop in partnership with the academic community.</p> <p>GOVERNMENT: we will continue to develop the role that The National Archives can play as a bridge between government departments and members of the academic and research communities through joint events and initiatives. This can help raise our profile and reputation for research, both academic and applied, and underlines our unique position between government, public, and the academic community.</p>
<p><b>Credible</b></p>	<p><b>Resourcing research</b></p> <p>We need to resource the research process internally to build momentum and demonstrate our corporate commitment to research.</p>	<p>RECRUITMENT: we will recruit a highly-skilled and interdisciplinary Research team under a permanent Head of Research. The Research and Academic Engagement teams will act as the co-ordinating centre of The National Archives' relationship with our academic audience and as an essential resource as The National Archives continues to develop its own research capability.</p> <p>ADVISORY BOARD: we will establish a Research and Academic Advisory Board consisting of external academics and partners to inform our approach to Research and Academic Engagement, ensuring that our activities remain pertinent within changing research and academic landscapes.</p> <p>METRICS: we will develop research success measures and metrics against which our research reputation and success can be monitored and judged.</p>

### 3. Summary and conclusion

The Academic Engagement and Research Roadmap has outlined the tangible ways in which The National Archives is planning to reinvigorate its Academic Engagement and Research in support of its business aims as outlined within *Archives Inspire*. It has given twenty-nine actions, which fall under six goals and have far-reaching consequences for how research is viewed and conducted within The National Archives, and how it is communicated externally between now and 2026. Work has already begun on a number of initiatives and we intend to provide regular updates on our progress against these objectives in the coming months and years. Over the remaining years of *Archives Inspire* and beyond, we would like to invite members of the academic community to work with us in the delivery of this roadmap, to help shape and refine its outputs, and to ensure that its contents are reflective of academic needs and developments within a fast-changing research landscape. *Archives Inspire*, and this roadmap, are our invitation to members of the academic community to join us on this exciting journey.