



## Reflective Account of Practice

### RAP Exemplar - Research

#### Introduction:

I joined SHU in 1994 as a senior lecturer in xxxx, progressing to PL and professor in 2005, on the basis of my research track record. I have been Head of the xxxx Research Centre (xxx) since 2005 and my key responsibilities are to lead the research in the Department of xxxx and xxxx, to be successful in terms of the research excellence framework (REF), maintaining an active, productive PhD student research body, currently comprising of over 40 students, ensuring a financially viable centre. Alongside this leadership and management role I also have a number of key activities within the university, which include:

1. Research on xxxx xxxx (I was returned in RAE 1996, 2001, 2008 and REF2014), including PhD supervision (case study 2).
2. Teaching, in xxxx, xxxx, research methods, career planning, BSc student research projects at level 6.
3. Equality and Diversity Board, specifically in relation to women in academia and in STEM, including Athena SWAN at university and department level (case study 1).
4. Career development of researchers (Concordat).
5. Multidisciplinary research lead for xxxx project.

#### Career milestones

In 1994, I had limited teaching experience, having been a researcher for the previous 16 years undertaking research on the xxxx of xxxx, a xxxx condition, which require both xxxx and xxxx subject knowledge, which I had acquired through self directed learning and peer supported learning, as my degrees, BSc and PhD, were in xxxx (K1). However I was very keen to begin teaching and I completed the postgraduate certificate in teaching and learning in HE in 1995, which provided me with knowledge of the workings of the teaching calendar, some key information about the functions within SHU, in terms of modules, assessments, exam boards etc. as well as giving me some feedback on my teaching style. One key aspect of this course was the peer support from others, still ongoing after 20 years, across the university who were in the same situation as me. Peer support has always been important for me, and has influenced me throughout my career, and affects my current practice as a research leader, I introduced a PhD student buddy system for new starters (A4), and established research theme groups to facilitate peer support for staff and research students. (A2, A4, K3, V3).

I had the opportunity to take on leadership of two masters modules very soon after my start at SHU and this gave me a rapid induction into developing two integrated modules in xxxx xxxx, which were taught jointly with The University of Sheffield (TUoS) and NHS staff from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (V1, V4). These modules were part of the MSc xxxx xxxx, which I went on to lead in 2000 for four years. I also worked with the Institute of xxxx xxxx (xxxx) to ensure the course was accredited (V4). I led a number of other modules on this course including Research Methods and research project module (A1, A2, A3). I was promoted to PL in 1998 due to my research track

record and teaching responsibilities at level 7. The close alignment of this masters course with the NHS xxxx laboratories influenced my teaching of undergraduate students as I was able to use examples of diseases with real data, linked to practice in terms of diagnosis, which provided a more effective learning tool than lectures alone (A3).

The most difficult time of my research career was the long period on short term contracts (1978-1994), which also coincided with the birth of my 3 children (1983, 1985 and 1987). I believe this period in my career has provided me with great resilience as well as giving me insights into the current issues facing both postdoctoral researchers on short term contracts as well as women wanting to have both a research career and a family. This has motivated my involvement in the Athena SWAN work (Case study 1).

#### **Areas of research, scholarship and professional practice**

I continued my research on xxxx when I moved to SHU. I went on to use my research experience, to teach students in the specific modules, from Level 4 xxxx to Level 5 xxxx, Level 6 xxxx, Level 6 research projects and Level 7, xxxx, Research Methods and Research Project<sup>2,3</sup>. My experience as an MSc course leader, with expertise in xxxx and xxxx, led me to be invited to act as external examiner for MSc courses in xxxx, University of West of England, Bristol 2004 to 2009; MSc xxxx, Queen's University Belfast 2007- 2008, MSc xxxx, Liverpool John Moores University 2011 – 2014; MSc xxxx, Birmingham University, 2014- 2018. I enjoy these roles as they have allowed me to network with colleagues at other universities who I also knew through my research work. I used my teaching experience to provide input into the assessment methods etc. at these universities as well as acquiring ideas of best practice, which I can then embed or share with colleagues at SHU (A1, A5). I believe through my input as external examiner, these courses have improved, specifically in terms of student feedback e.g. very few of these courses were providing a structured assessment feedback sheet with the breakdown of marks for the MSc project component of the degree (A3).

Since 1995, when I recruited my first PhD student, funded by the xxxx, I have been involved in supervising 15 PhD students. Together with these students and researchers I have published >60 papers in the field of xxxx with the majority on xxxx, in peer reviewed journals, a key skill for their future scientific careers<sup>4</sup>. My most recent achievement was to edit a book on xxxx<sup>5</sup>. I use my past experience of PhD student supervision to run an annual training course for current PhD supervisors in the xxxx. I have been an external examiner for many PhD students (~20) at other UK universities, which allows me to benchmark the levels of attainment of my own PhD students and embed some of the learning in my own practice (Case study 2).

I have previously served on the Board of The British Society for xxxx for a number of years. I was a member of the grant review panel for the xxxx of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and currently I am a member of the management group of the xxxx Bank. This experience is proving highly valuable, with the learning I have gained informing my current role as chair of the SHU xxxx subcommittee to ensure practices are put in place at SHU which comply with the xxxx Authority regulations (K1). This is an example of how my research interests and roles externally, impact on the contributions I make at SHU (A5).

#### **Involvement in teaching and learning initiatives:**

In 2011/12, I was awarded Faculty funding for a 6 month research project on research informed teaching (RIT) in xxxx and this work was presented at the LTA conference in 2012<sup>6</sup>. I disseminated the findings at a CPD event for SHU staff (K5, V3). At a recent HWB research day, RIT from xxxx/xxxx and xxxx was presented in a plenary talk. Pro VC, Prof Karen Bryan commented on the excellent ideas for RIT being practised in our Department. I have been instrumental in ensuring the success of this model, supporting new staff to be research active, whilst teaching in related areas.

I initiated the Professional doctorate for xxxx laboratory staff in 2008, working with the Programme leader in health to validate the course for xxxx. I recruit students and teach on the course to a multi-professional student body (A1, A2). This has been successful with four

**Comment [PT1]:** Despite this section being focused on research and scholarship, clear evidence is provided of impact both on teaching and on staff who teach others. These are clear SFHEA indicators.

**Comment [PT2]:** Strong evidence of having an impact on teaching through research activity.

Doctorates already awarded to NHS staff with at least 2 of these gaining promotion as a result. My motivation for this was the masters students I had supervised were looking for further career development and the DProf was a very positive move for them to demonstrate their potential (V4).

#### **Networks and community building**

As soon as I arrived in Sheffield I initiated collaborations with clinicians at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in the xxxx Department who worked with xxxx patients, as this was a vital aspect to my research to be relevant to people with xxxx. Over the following 15 years I successfully supervised 3 clinician PhD students both at SHU and TUoS, together with clinical colleagues; two of these students went on to become clinical consultants (V4). I continue to have research collaborations with consultant xxxxs and I believe this reflects my commitment to strong working relationships and linking basic research to clinical practice (V3).

I very much enjoy working across the faculties and directorates at SHU. I believe my motivation is in part because I am keen to be at the heart of university activities but also because I very much enjoy being part of a team and making an impact within the academic community. These include the SHU, HWB and departmental level Athena SWAN groups (case study 1). I have led the REF submission in xxxx in 2008 and 2014, which I did by bringing together a team of staff within xxxx, including early career researchers with more experienced researchers, in consideration of succession planning for REF2020. I also contribute to the University REF group and have as much REF experience as most of the members of this committee. I am also currently the REF lead for HWB and I am mentoring the two staff Unit of assessment coordinators in HWB as they are new to their role. I have also organised three CPD events related to understanding the REF and networking with other researchers for staff in HWB (V3).

I was co-investigator on an Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council funded (£1million) multidisciplinary project and successfully petitioned the VC to put further funding (£500K) into a SHU multidisciplinary project called xxxx. I have led this project for two years. This project has given staff an opportunity to meet other researchers across SHU at sandpit events and for many early career researchers it has provided an opportunity for them to submit their first bid for funding and to manage a project (A4). I am currently the chair of the Concordat for Early Career Researchers (V4) subcommittee of the University Research and Innovation committee.

I believe I can honestly say that I use my position in the research community not only to disseminate my research but also to help the people around me and use my networks to facilitate others career progression (V3)

#### **Staff development activities**

With the experience I have gained through my own career pathway, together with experience gained from other colleagues, I provide a number of CPD opportunities to staff, these include 'How to become a professor', 'Career progression for early career women academics', which I co-facilitate with my colleague Professor xxxx, with input from the HR people development team; 'Confidence and Resilience in career progression' as part of an International Women's Day (IWD) event in 2015, delivered to SHU and TUoS academic and professional services staff. I also mentor staff on three different mentoring programmes at SHU, Aspire, Aurora and the latest Academic Leadership programme (Case study 1).

My experiences in my career are extremely valuable in my mentoring roles. As one of few women in a senior role in SHU in science subject areas I was asked by the then Dean of the Faculty of Development and Society to lead a bid for an Athena SWAN award for the Dept of xxxx xxxx. I attended a range of events to learn about the requirements, including those organised by the UK Resource Centre for women in science, as well as Athena SWAN meetings as part of a North East Network (K1). The bid was successful with us gaining a silver award.

#### **Leadership, management and organisational roles:**

My main role in leadership is as Head of the xxxx. I have held this post for 10 years and when I reflect back on my initial steps in management I was very tentative, being very concerned about making decisions, indeed putting them off! I was very much more reactive, responding to requests

**Comment [PT3]:** Although most of this section describes a role in research and supporting the development of other researchers, this is clear evidence that this person leads and influences the practices of others and thus has a *sustained* approach to their leadership and mentoring roles.

from my manager and very much inwardly focussed in trying to engender an inclusive research culture within the staff in the department. However with experience I am now confident in relation to my management style and as well as engaging with staff within my research centre I am now much more proactive, ensuring the actions higher up in the Faculty executive and in the university executive which impact upon research are fully considered. I do this through my membership of the Research Innovation Committee at faculty and university level. As my research career has progressed I have also taken on leadership roles externally e.g. current committee member of the European School of xxxx (V4).

I am committed to public engagement in research. I was asked to join the Sheffield British Science Association Committee, which organises the annual Science Festival. Previously I had contributed to this previously for many years giving talks at schools about my research on xxxx and the brain, but I wanted to involve a wider group of staff and students within xxxx and Science and Engineering at SHU. My motivation for this was to enthuse children and families to be interested in science and to consider this as a future career, in people who have not got a traditional university background. (V2) This led me to develop the 'Explore Science and Engineering @SHU' event which ran for the first time in 2014 and then again in 2015 during the Festival of Science. I have a 'lab in a bag' stand and the hands on approach to experiments for children generates a great deal of enthusiasm, putting on a white lab coat and latex gloves seems to excite them in a way that a book or other form of teaching might not! (A1, A2, A4). Also I developed knitting as a communication tool, knitting cells whilst talking about what they do captured people's attention and highlighted that no one learns to knit anymore! This year over 40 undergraduates, PhD students and staff engaged in the event which attracted 250 visitors. The feedback from the public, young and old, was extremely complimentary to the students and staff who put on activities and it certainly gave the students confidence in engaging with the public, having support and feedback from me during the event (A2, A3).

As my career has moved on, with retirement looming in four years, I now see my role as an academic leader to ensure the success of my academic colleagues in their research and I do all I can to support this by informal mentoring and promoting their activities whenever and wherever I get a chance! I also use my expertise to enhance a range of activities within SHU and in some cases nationally.

Word count 2,464

**Comment [PT4]:** A very good example of research-based work but which involves good practice in teaching and learning delivery at its heart and the key UKPSF V2 in its wider sense. It further emphasises leadership and additional wider influence by involving large numbers of academic staff and PhD students.

**Comment [PT5]:** Overall, we see a committed and highly successful research practitioner and leader, but whose passion for teaching shines through and is well demonstrated in a number of ways. The well articulated desire to increase participation in HE and to support the career development of women adds to the picture of a deep set of values and leadership engagement that clearly aligns with the teaching and learning elements of HEA Senior Fellowship.