

Northumbria is UK's 'biggest riser for research power'

The results of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) demonstrate that Northumbria University, Newcastle, has made a major step forward in research, reporting the largest rise in research rated as world-leading and internationally excellent by the REF. The University has nearly tripled its

share of research rated in these categories.

Professor Andrew Wathey, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria, said: “These results mark a major step-change for Northumbria, positioning the University decisively as one of the fastest rising institutions in the UK higher education sector, and creating a broad and robust platform for the next phase of our development in research.”

The 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the internationally recognised barometer of research reputation, providing a key measure to determine research funding to universities from 2015/16. Alongside the quality of research carried out by universities, REF 2014 also assesses the wider cultural, societal and economic impact of a university’s research.

With world-leading research identified in every area submitted for assessment, Northumbria has demonstrated success across the board. Northumbria has nearly tripled its share of research rated world-leading and internationally excellent.

The volume of research submitted by Northumbria is more than double that which the University submitted to the last Research Assessment Exercise which took place in 2008. The results also show that quality has risen significantly.

Professor Wathey continues: “Our strategy since 2008 has been to build Northumbria’s research capability and to establish a secure research base, so that the impact of excellent research is felt as widely as possible across our disciplines and can drive excellence across the full range of the University’s activities.

“We therefore wanted to ensure in our submission to REF 2014 that every single bit of world-leading and internationally excellent work was identified and funded, to provide a secure basis for future growth.

“The improvement in research power ranking marks one of the biggest steps forward in the UK sector. We have created the 2nd-strongest pool of research activity of all modern universities, achieving critical mass in research that will also drive excellence in the student experience and in enterprise.

“The results demonstrate the University’s success since 2008 in attracting significant new research talent while also developing existing research staff; they also evidence the strength of research carried out by early career researchers, alongside that of established academics.

“The results represent a step-change in Northumbria’s research activity and positioning, demonstrating success in changing the research aspiration of the institution. They form an excellent platform for the next phase of our research strategy.”

The REF results provide an external validation of the significant developments in research at Northumbria University over the last five years.

Northumbria recorded strong results in Allied Health, History, English, General Engineering, Art and Design, and Communication, Cultural and Media.

In General Engineering, English and History, Northumbria recorded upper-quartile scores in the proportion of research outputs rated as world-leading.

In terms of impact bringing societal, cultural and economic benefit, 73% of the submissions in Psychology were rated as outstanding. The impact was demonstrated through projects including breakfast clubs in partnership with Kellogg’s, and the design of health-related websites funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). A further study looking at early interventions to reduce harmful alcohol consumption has been adopted by medical practitioners and governments around the world.

Professor Wathey concluded: “REF 2014 has shown that the national research story is one of continuing improvement against international benchmarks. In this landscape, we have shown ourselves to be one of the fastest moving institutions in establishing a comprehensive research base, achieving a new level in our mission to be a research-rich, business-focussed professional university.”

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focussed, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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