



RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SUPPORT BENCHMARKING EXERCISE

TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT

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1. Introduction

This case study describes a benchmarking exercise in research and enterprise support undertaken by SUMS consulting with universities from the 1994 Group.

Purpose

SUMS Consulting was asked “To benchmark the resources devoted to each area of research and enterprise support activity, both centrally in each institution and where evidently identifiable in other units (faculties, schools, departments, centres and research groups), in terms of staff FTE, grade profile, discipline group, and cost profile”.

2. The Project

Background

Members of the group wished to ensure that professional support services for research and enterprise in their institutions were fit for purpose and delivering value for money. The key drivers were to:

- Support discussion of which areas of research and enterprise support appear to be effective and efficient
- Identify where savings might potentially be made or where additional resources might be required
- Identify best practice and innovative approaches.

Scope

The exercise covered central and devolved research support and enterprise support, including associated policy, governance, planning and finance activities, but excluding areas such as appointment of research staff and KTPs, and research student administration. Involvement of academic staff in research and enterprise management was out of scope.

Timescale

The exercise ran over a period of nine months between September 2011 and May 2012, with a census date of 31 July 2011.

Approach

SUMS Consulting developed further the approach used in the benchmarking exercise of research and enterprise support undertaken for a smaller group of universities in 2010-11 (SUMS assignment 1232):

- Worked with each institution to establish the resources used in the relevant activities in terms of organisational unit, staff FTE, grade, normalised salary cost, and source of funding
- Worked with each institution to assign the FTE against a core classification of research and enterprise support activities, as set out in the classification table below
- Collated and compared the data sets, scaled in relation to research income, academic staff supported, and enterprise activity.

A presentation of findings and proposals was given to the Heads of Research and Enterprise from the participating universities on the 28th of March, 2012.

Participants were sent a suite of documents including a report, a presentation and a set of excel spreadsheets containing low level data. This case study is the final deliverable from the benchmarking exercise and contains an overview of the method and data collection and some high level results coming out of the study.

3. The Method

Data

A very small set of anonymised base data for central and devolved administrative staff was collected from each University consisting of:

- Organisation Unit Name
- Sub Organisation Unit Name
- Person Identified
- Job Title
- Discipline Group (General, Arts, Business, Humanities and Social Sciences, Subjects Allied to Medicine, Science/Tech/Eng)
- Grade
- Funding Route (Central or Devolved)
- Funding Source (General, External or HEIF)
- Person FTE

Focusing on this small dataset enabled rapid data collection and analysis. The participants felt that the data collection was valuable in its own right, making visible institutional research and enterprise support in totality.

Classification

In order to compare like for like, the FTE for each role was attributed against a core common classification of research and enterprise activities:

Area	Level 1a Description	Code	Description
R	Planning, Strategy & Governance	10	Research Infrastructure & Capability
R	Planning, Strategy & Governance	11	Management of Core University Research Funding
R	Pre Award Support	12	Research Funding Sources
R	Pre Award Support	13	Research Grant Applications
R	Pre Award Support	14	Research Contract Negotiation and Preparation
R	Post Award Support	15	Research Project Set-Up
R	Post Award Support	16	Research Activities and Outputs
R	Post Award Support	17	Manage Research Project (exclude Principal Investigator activity)
R	Post Award Support	18	Research Project Continuation or Closure
R	Planning, Strategy & Governance	19	Research Governance and Monitoring
R	Other	20	Other Research Support
E	Planning, Strategy & Governance	50	Enterprise Infrastructure and Capability
E	Planning, Strategy & Governance	51	Management of Core University Enterprise Funding
E	Pre Contract Support	52	Enterprise Engagement and Funding
E	Pre Contract Support	53	Enterprise Grant Applications
E	Pre Contract Support	54	Enterprise Contract Negotiation and Preparation
E	Post Contract Support	55	Enterprise Set Up
E	Post Contract Support	56	Enterprise Activities and Outputs
E	Post Contract Support	57	Manage Enterprise Delivery (exclude Principal Entrepreneur activity)
E	Post Contract Support	58	Enterprise Project Continuation or Closure
E	Planning, Strategy & Governance	59	Enterprise Governance and Monitoring
E	Other	60	Other Enterprise Support

This classification was essential to the comparison of data, independent of organisational structure and location

4. The Outputs

Forum

- A facilitated forum was held with representatives from each of the universities. Prior to the forum participants were sent unscaled and scaled results from the benchmarking exercise.
- Following discussions at the forum, certain institutions resubmitted their data sets. Tables and charts were recreated with the cleansed data sets.
- One key discussion point was the calculation of the number of research active staff for scaling purposes.

Purpose:

- Validate the data with regard to reasonable consistency and comparability, and identify significant variations
- Interrogate the variations in the light of factors including effectiveness of service provision, and strategic or structural differences between the institutions
- Enable each institution to assess where activities appeared to be effective and efficient, where savings might potentially be made, or where additional resources might be required

Charts

Summary tables and charts were produced to compare the aggregated FTE, grade profile and normative salary profile by activity and by budget. The results were presented for each activity grouping, both in aggregate and experimentally scaled to comparative ratios such as number of research-active staff. Aggregated and anonymised data has been included here to provide a summary of the results of the benchmarking exercise

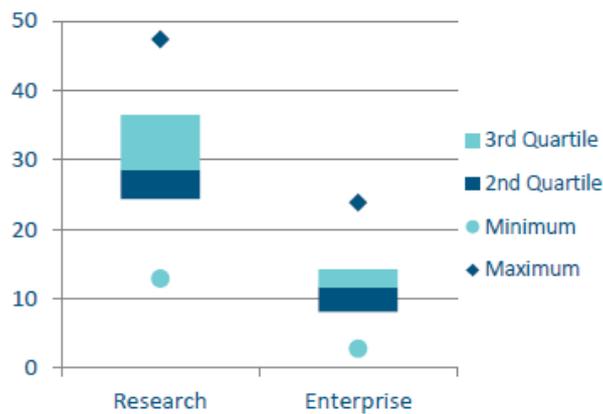


Chart 1: Unscaled Support FTEs

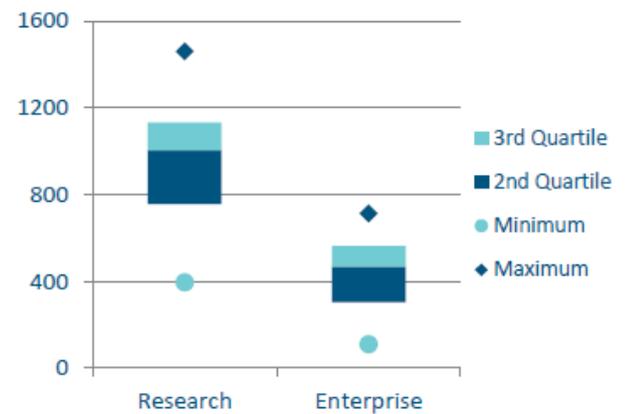


Chart 2: Unscaled Total Support Salary



Chart 3: Research Support FTEs by Discipline

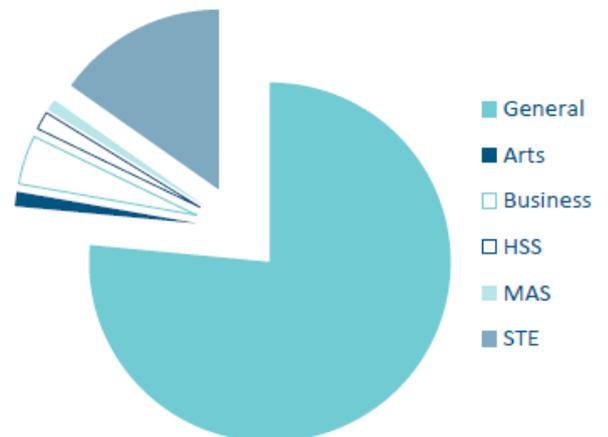


Chart 3: Enterprise Support FTEs by Discipline