

The Botswana Statement:

Global Challenges, Research, Innovation, and Impact: A Research Management Perspective

A call for the recognition of and a career framework for professional research managers and administrators

Summary

Research plays a major role in driving the discovery of solutions to the challenges faced across the globe. The global investments in research and development have skyrocketed over the last twenty years, promoting economic growth, and driving competition for international research funding and staff. The emerging focus on research has encouraged institutions to be more accountable regarding how funding is used and increased societal expectations for impact that benefits society. The establishment of an effective framework to promote and sustain high-quality research has become a critical priority in both national and international policy agendas. The recognition of and a career framework for professional research managers and administrators, the enablers of research potentials, must follow investments in research.

Role of research in providing solutions to global challenges

The UN Sustainable Development Goals have become a beacon for governments and organisations in setting priorities, including within the realm of research. Research plays an important role in contributing towards many of the SDGs¹. To ensure a mutual commitment between the governments that fund and sustain research, and the research sector that strives to deliver societal impacts, research support offices play a pivotal role. Research support offices ensure that funding is used in accordance with public and funders expectations, supporting compliance with ethical frameworks, ensure due diligence, and finally, that the outcomes of research are realised for the benefit of society as a whole through education, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

Global investment in research has increased in recent years; spending on research among the OECD countries has risen from 2,1% of GDP in 2000 to 2,7% of GDP in 2021² with a growth in GDP per capita around 2% in the same period³. It is therefore key to sustain this growth that higher education institutions create and retain an effective environment to recruit, train and secure highly qualified students and academic staff.

Importance of research managers and administrators as a profession

The internationalisation of research has resulted in an unprecedented increase in joint research projects, cross-national research collaborations, and shared research outputs, hereunder co-authorship of scientific journal articles⁴. The increasingly global nature of the research environment has called for professionals who support

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/sdg-literacy-and-relating-your-research-global-challenges>

² <https://data.oecd.org/rd/gross-domestic-spending-on-r-d.htm>

³ Except for 2009 and 2020, where the global GDP was negative:
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD.ZG?end=2022&start=2000>

⁴ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/sti_scoreboard-2009-47-en.pdf?expires=1688474414&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=3AFC439AB7AD951CCDFC4262533DF747

researchers in acquiring funding, managing sustainable projects, securing ethical standards, and ensuring financial accountability. These are all necessary components and vital for allowing researchers to focus on their complex endeavors. The ability to handle the complexity of the 21st century research environment is essential for success in the global competition amongst nations to increase their visibility, secure funding and promote collaboration. Recognising the valuable contributions of professional research managers and administrators is essential for a nation to secure career opportunities for research support staff and advance its research endeavors based on a long-term vision.

Signed by:

Mr. Jan Andersen, Senior Executive Advisor, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark (0000-0002-3750-0960)
Dr. Mogodisheng Sekhwela, Director of Research Innovation and Partnerships, Botswana Open University, Botswana

Mrs. Lesego Thamae, Director, Department of Research Science and Technology, Ministry of Communication Knowledge and Technology, Botswana

Prof. K.H. Moahi, Ag. Vice Chancellor, Botswana Open University, Botswana

Dr. Changu Batisani, Office of Research and Development Research, Botswana Open University, Botswana

Prof. Sunny Aiyuk, Dean School of Science & Technology, Botswana Open University, Botswana

Prof. R. Tabulawa, Director of the Office of Research and Development Research, University of Botswana, Botswana

Dr. B. Mbongwe, Director Research and Innovation, The Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation (BITRI), Botswana

Dr. G. Gatsha, DVC Student Services, Botswana Open University, Botswana

Mr. Stefan Apitz, Research Funding Manager, Hochschule Harz, Germany

Dr. Gabriella Arrigoni, Impact and Engagement Officer, Northumbria University, United Kingdom

Mrs. Vanda Baloh, Deputy Director, ZRC SAZU, Slovenia

Mr. Sidney Engelbrecht, Senior Research Compliance Specialist, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia (0000-0002-2850-3836)

Mr. Simon Glasser, International Research Development Manager, University of Bristol, United Kingdom (0000-0002-1166-2865)

Dr. Simon Gray, Director of Research Development, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Dr. Nicola Kernaghan, International Research Development Manager, Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom

Mr. William McKerverey, Research Ethics and Integrity Manager, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Dr. Wendy Mcloone, Director Research Services, Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom

Mr. Jagdees Pabla, Senior Partner, Research Delivery, Coventry University, United Kingdom

Ms. Patrizia Rampioni, Research Advisor, Erasmus University of Rotterdam, Netherlands

Ms. Olga Roig-Herrera, Head of The International Projects Office, CREAM, Spain

Dr. Mimi Urbanc, Deputy Director, ZRC SAZU, Slovenia

Mrs. Rūta Žmuidzinaitė, Senior Adviser for Social Innovation, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Dr. Mariko Yang-Yoshihara Instructor & Education Researcher Stanford University United States

Mrs. Johanna Roodt, Head of Events & Member Engagement, European Association of Research Managers and Administrators, Belgium

Dr. Prenitha Sewnarain, Project Manager, Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association, South Africa

Dr. Therina Theron, Senior Director, Research & Innovation, Stellenbosch University, South Africa (0000-0002-2204-3947)

Dr. Simon Kerridge, Honorary Staff, Research and Innovation Services, University of Kent and Kerridge Research Consulting, United Kingdom (0000-0003-4094-3719)

Participants of the Colloquium “Global Challenges, Research, Innovation and Impact”, Botswana Open University, May 24th, 2023, and contributors from the Research Managers and Administrators community⁵.

How to endorse the Botswana Statement?

Sign up as an individual and as an organisation: <https://bit.ly/BotswanaStatement>

The Botswana Statement can be supported by sharing, endorsing, commenting and supporting the statement on your organisations website;

Include it in research articles, presentations, newsletters and communications;

Include it in formal policies of your organization;

Find the Botswana Statement here: DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10696970

⁵ On 24th May 2023, a group of research managers and administrators from different parts of the world had the opportunity to engage in dialogues with colleagues in Gaborone, Botswana in the Colloquium “Global Challenges, Research, Innovation and Impact” organised by Botswana Open University. The colloquium had over 100 participants both on-site and online viewing from the BOU Facebook platform. The purpose of the colloquium was to discuss and share experiences on global challenges that surround research. This statement is the culmination of the colloquium’s deliberations and discussions.