PRISM - Maximising the Value of Digital Research

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Professional Research Investment and Strategy Manager (PRISM) is a new job family having been launched at UCL through ARC in 2022.

PRISMs work to enable the delivery and growth of large research investments. They use their skills and experience to contribute to key areas in project management, community engagement, research facilitation, strategy development and operations delivery.
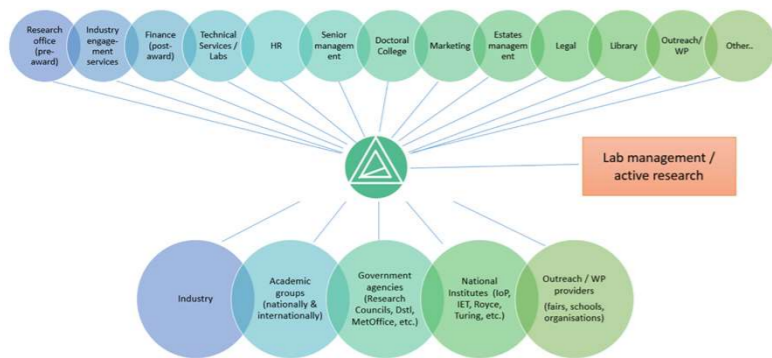

Figure 1 – Series of responsibilities that PRISM staff undertake. Image from About PRISMs - PRISM network (pris-managers.ac.uk)

This new job family is in response to the growing need for research technology professionals (RTPs) career pathways. Creating standardised and openly published job descriptions has allowed for clear expectations within each grade[1] This enables participation in research projects, therefore allowing PRISM staff to be allocated and cost-recovered against a wide range of projects and grants.

The need for work that PRISM staff undertake has grown within recent years, Recognising that many who take on research supporting roles have a background in STEM subjects, with a recent study showing that 50% of PRISMs hold a PhD[2].

This has been further compounded by UKRI recently recognising the value that this role supports, and in recent calls support the addition of PRISM staff into the application costings; recognising the contribution this role makes to successful grant outputs.

At ARC, PRISMs are currently leading and/or contributing to several Digital Research projects including, the UK Square Kilometre Array Regional Centre, FAIR Data Accelerator and a Doctoral Training Centre.

Over the last two years PRISMs have been involved in 13 research proposals totalling £2.4m and actively engaged in supporting 5 research grants.
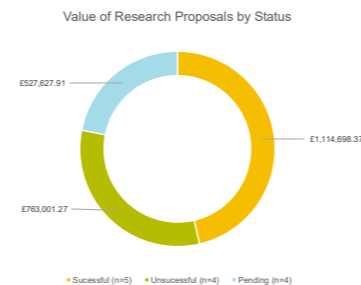
PRISMs navigate and harness research ecosystems working closely with their academic colleagues, provide better governance, build communities, and create and implement long-term strategies.

Staff who work within the profession are unique in understanding the science, research, and culture of their chosen fields, this long-term support is now being recognised as a clear benefit to research. The Department has chosen to invest, as part of a long-term strategy, by recruiting into these roles.
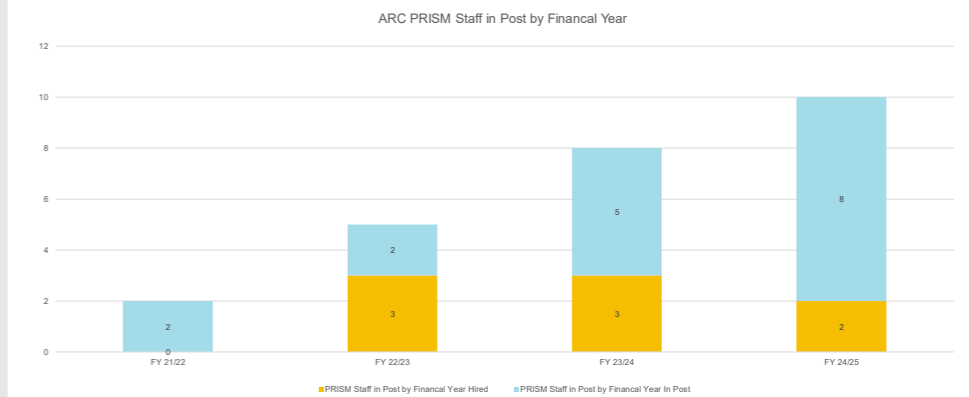
Whilst ARC's Research Software Engineers were the first in the country to undertake a financially sustainable cost-recovery model. The same approach is underway for the PRISM job family.

ARC actively recruits staff on open-ended contracts, which goes against the grain, with 78% of PRISM staff surveyed being on fixed-term contracts at HE institutions[2]. This approach allows ARC to allocate staff to projects that meet individual's career goals and strengths and in turn provides a long-term future for supporting UCL's digital research scholarship.

[1] https://doi.org/10.5522/04/25196612.v1
[2] About PRISMs - PRISM network (pris-managers.ac.uk)

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> addresses key challenges of the profession namely providing a career pathway, enabling participation in research projects and recognition of contributions to research
>
> Chisholm, Louise, 2024-05-31T09:09:26.458

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