



DRUSSA Final Benchmarking Report 2016

Summary of the 2016 DRUSSA Benchmarking Survey Responses and
Conference Discussions

June 2016

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The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities



Funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development under
Accountable Grant Component Code 202004-101 Purchase Order PO4049234

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Preface

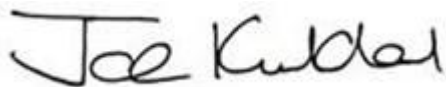
There have been many initiatives to promote effective use of university research in recent years – and many terms to describe the process. The DRUSSA programme has been distinctive amongst these not only because it utilised the concept of ‘research uptake’, but because it recognises that long term progress requires change and reform at institutional level, rather than simply mechanisms to promote specific research findings.

DRUSSA also recognises that African universities want to improve their capacity in this area. Our programme has supported their doing this from the inside, rather than imposing any externally devised mechanism. Significantly, it requires that they utilise their own resources for doing this. The programme has provided support through training, advice, benchmarking and communication – however, participating universities have not received hard cash. The advances demonstrated in this Report, therefore, are very much those of the institutions themselves, rather than that of the project team. This makes them more valuable and, hopefully, sustainable.

The report shows that these advances have been significant. Participating universities have markedly developed their skills, structures and support for research uptake activity. There is understanding that support for research uptake does not begin when an individual research project ends, or even begins, but with a holistic approach which raises awareness of the issues throughout the institution. Encouragingly, this message is particularly well received amongst university leaders who are setting the agenda amongst management and academic staff.

Much, however, remains to be done. Universities and governments throughout the world have found the task of ensuring research uptake more complex and elusive than they first imagined. Africa will be no exception, and it is important that funding bodies realise this. The task of making African universities more responsive to external needs cannot be confined to a five year project, but needs a consistent approach over time.

The Report demonstrates that the approach of working with institutions, rather than focussing efforts on individual academics, projects or through external agencies, is working. This should be welcome news to the grant funders – the UK Department for International Development – and even more importantly to the institutions themselves. I hope that all will regard the progress reported here as part of a longer term strategy.



John Kirkland, Deputy Secretary General

The Association of Commonwealth Universities

Executive summary

This is the third and final DRUSSA Benchmarking Report, tracking both the type and the degree of institutional change for research uptake observed across all 22 DRUSSA universities. Based on the direct testimony of the universities themselves, through survey data and through the 2016 Benchmarking and Leadership Conference (April 2016, Mauritius), this report captures the innovations, successes, challenges and lessons of the five years of the programme. It does this in dialogue with the previous iterations of the survey and conferences, in 2012 and 2014, in order to establish trends in institutional change by geographic region and by thematic area of focus.

Consonant with this approach, the following pages are subdivided into regional and thematic sections, outlining observations drawn from both the survey data and discussions at the 2016 Conference. Building on the preliminary 2016 Benchmarking Survey Report (which was tabled at the Conference itself), this final Benchmarking Report seeks to capture not only quantitative trends across all universities over the lifespan of the programme, but also more qualitative examples and instances of good practice that were the focus of group and plenary discussion. At the Conference, delegates drew on their own expertise and experiences to query the survey data in depth, and to agree forward actions to secure the sustainability of gains made so far.

Synthesising our learning: the 2016 Conference Consensus

As in past years, the 2016 Conference was largely structured across the four main Survey themes of research uptake strategy, processes, stakeholder engagement and communication. Alongside these thematic focus areas, the Conference concentrated on the development of tools to motivate and support future planning. This was consistent with our objective to ensure that the final Benchmarking Conference consensus could aid research uptake sustainability as directly as possible.

To do this, all delegates to the Conference were asked to prepare a series of exercises in advance which would be subject to workshopping and discussion once the Conference began. These exercises included:

- A **review of the Research Uptake Good Practice Statements document**, authored with Leaders and Champions at the inaugural 2012 DRUSSA Conference. This review was intended to highlight and prioritise key statements that have been deemed most effective in motivating and supporting institutional change for research uptake over the course of the programme.
- A draft of a new **Vice Chancellors' Briefing Document**, to effectively summarise the key achievements in research uptake at each university over the course of the programme, to establish evidence for the strategic value of research uptake to each university, and to motivate and support university leadership in driving research uptake systems going forward.
- Design of **Demonstrator Research Project Posters**, to communicate examples of high-quality research that are being communicated and engaged externally in new ways, involving the research uptake expertise and systems that each university has been developing over the course of the programme.

In discussing these exercises in regional, thematic and plenary sessions, we were able to distil core messages and lessons for future action into a summary "Conference Consensus". This document was tabled

on the final day of the Conference, and then disseminated to all delegates once the Conference concluded to solicit further comment and contributions. The Conference Consensus document is intended to:

- Synthesise learning and agreed action points discussed
- Establish a series of common medium- and long-term goals to support sustainable research uptake systems, and to resolve concomitant tools and takeaways to help achieve these goals
- Share key messages that can support university leaders and Vice Chancellors in their own efforts to support research uptake systems at partner universities
- Highlight a selected range of pertinent Good Practice Statements that can help to motivate and support research uptake systems in diverse institutional contexts

The Conference Consensus document has been produced to coincide with the publication of this 2016 DRUSSA Final Benchmarking Report, and can be read concurrently. Highlights and recommendations emerging from this Consensus include:

- A balanced approach to research, which includes a focus on basic, applied, industry-facing and public-facing research
- Facilitation of a research uptake culture as well as research uptake systems and processes
- Training of research uptake professional staff as well as academics and researchers as communicators
- The role of the Vice Chancellor as an ambassador for university research (and its wider utility) is critical

The Conference Consensus document, drawing on discussions and evidence tabled at the 2016 Benchmarking Conference, can be consulted as a succinct guide to motivate sustainable research uptake systems and ways of working across DRUSSA partner universities. In concert with other DRUSSA learning resources, we hope this can contribute to universities' plans of action in securing research uptake for the medium- and long-term.

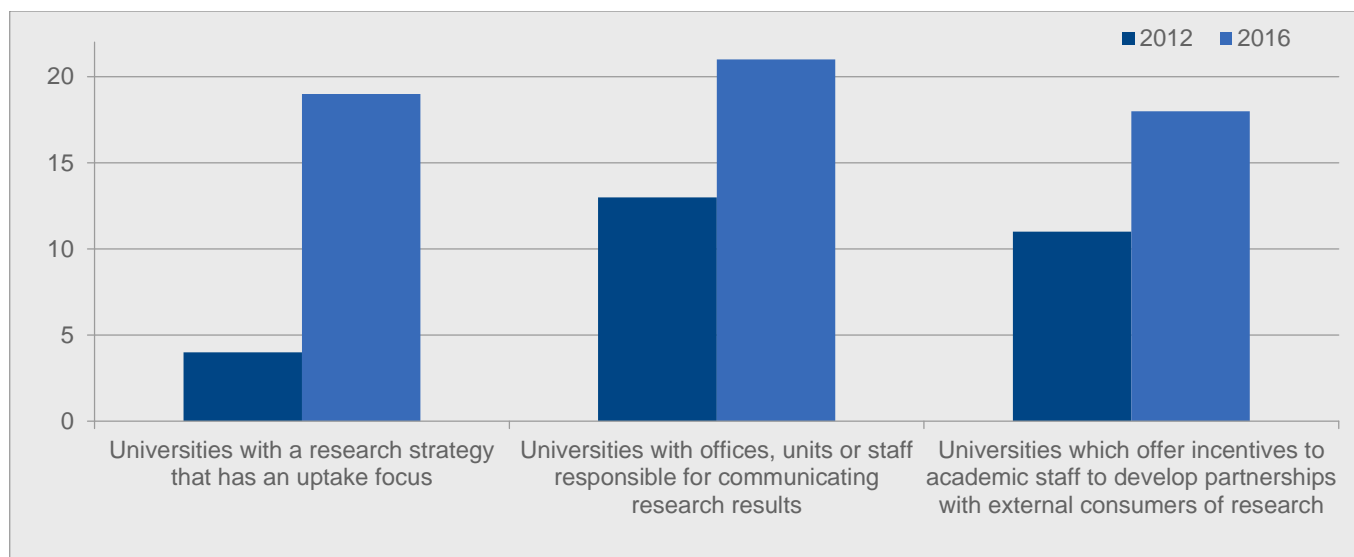
Within this report

The Conference Consensus document outlines goals, objectives and plans of action for future work, which is not to say that the full Benchmarking Report is primarily reflective of past activities and achievements. The Report can also be used to motivate and inform future action, to identify and support strategies to ensure the sustainability of the advances already made and those made once the programme concludes. This, like so many aspects of DRUSSA, will be a collaborative effort. The information collected and then fed-back to members, funders and policymakers will be so much greater than the sum of the individual experiences of the 22 universities concerned; it will reflect the combined knowledge of a community of peers, percolated over five years of shared experience and focused learning.

With this in mind, the following sub-section illustrates key findings of each of the thematic areas of research uptake. Here, we have deliberately focused on some of the most significant areas of change, relative to the baseline of information collected in 2012. Further discussion of these figures and the issues that contextualise their realisation appear in the corresponding chapters in the body of the report.

Section A: Research uptake strategy

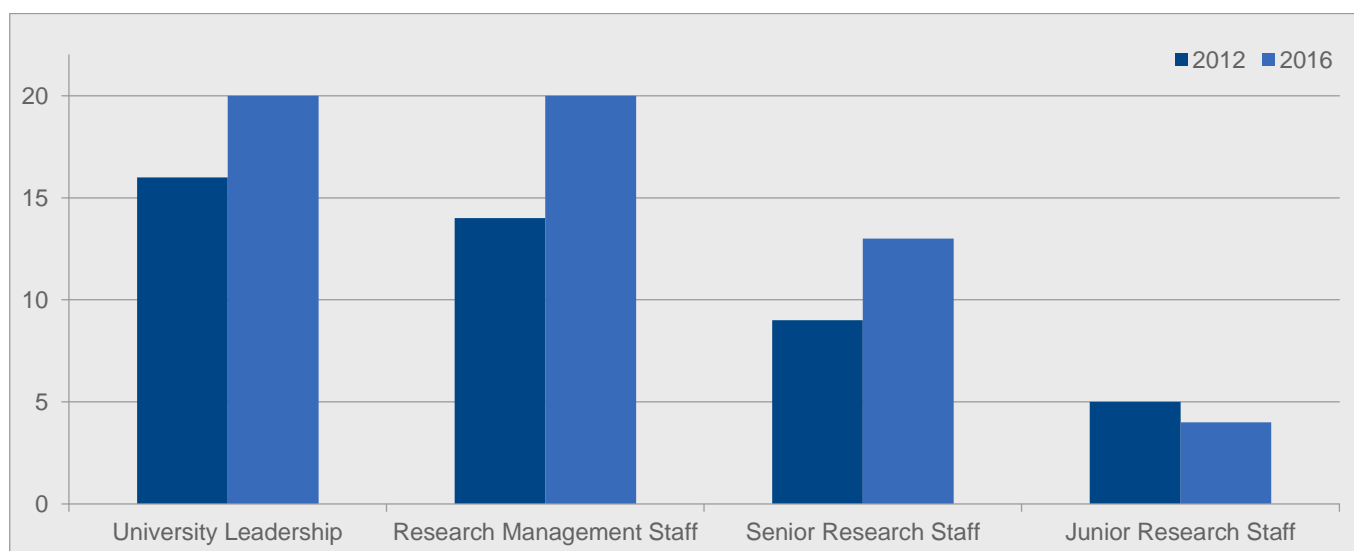
Figure 1: Research uptake strategy changes in DRUSSA universities – 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

- Participating universities have reported growth in interest in research uptake across a majority of their university offices, particularly Vice-Chancellor's offices, industrial liaison offices, libraries, and public relations offices. Over half of respondents (59%) have also indicated that the level of communication and cooperation between university offices/staff with interest in or responsibility for research uptake has improved significantly since 2012.

Figure 2: Enthusiastic, actively supportive and engaged attitudes towards research uptake – 2012-2016

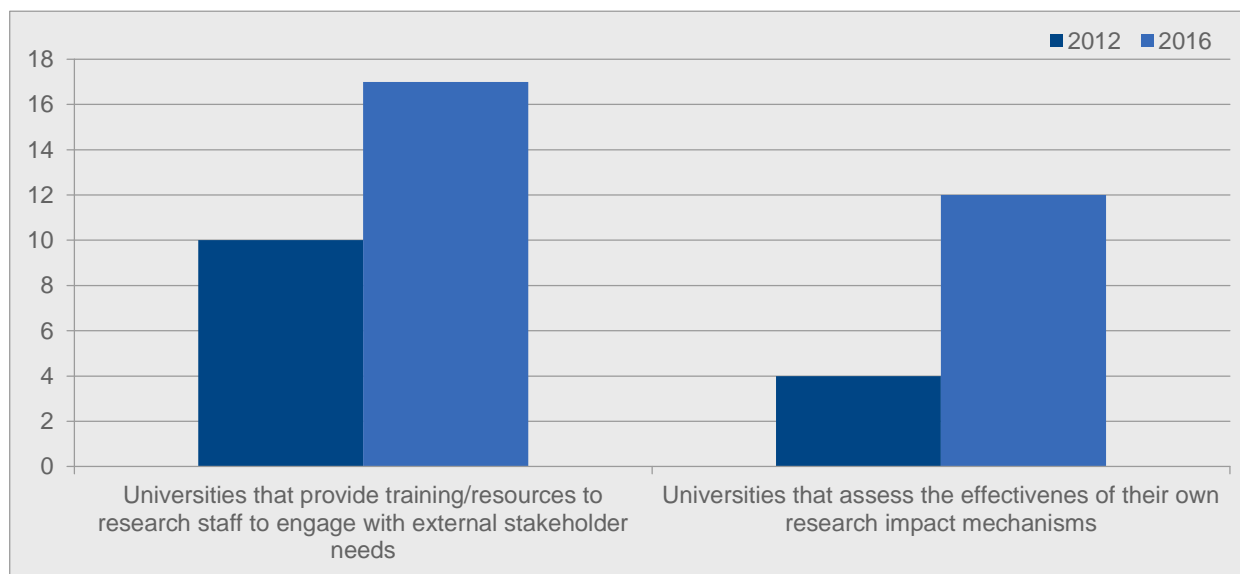


Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 20); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 21)

Section B. Research uptake processes

- Over half of respondents indicated that their universities have mechanisms to assess the wider impact of their research, and that they also assess the *effectiveness* of their own impact mechanisms – up from 20% of respondents in 2012.

Figure 3: Research uptake process changes in DRUSSA universities – 2012-2016

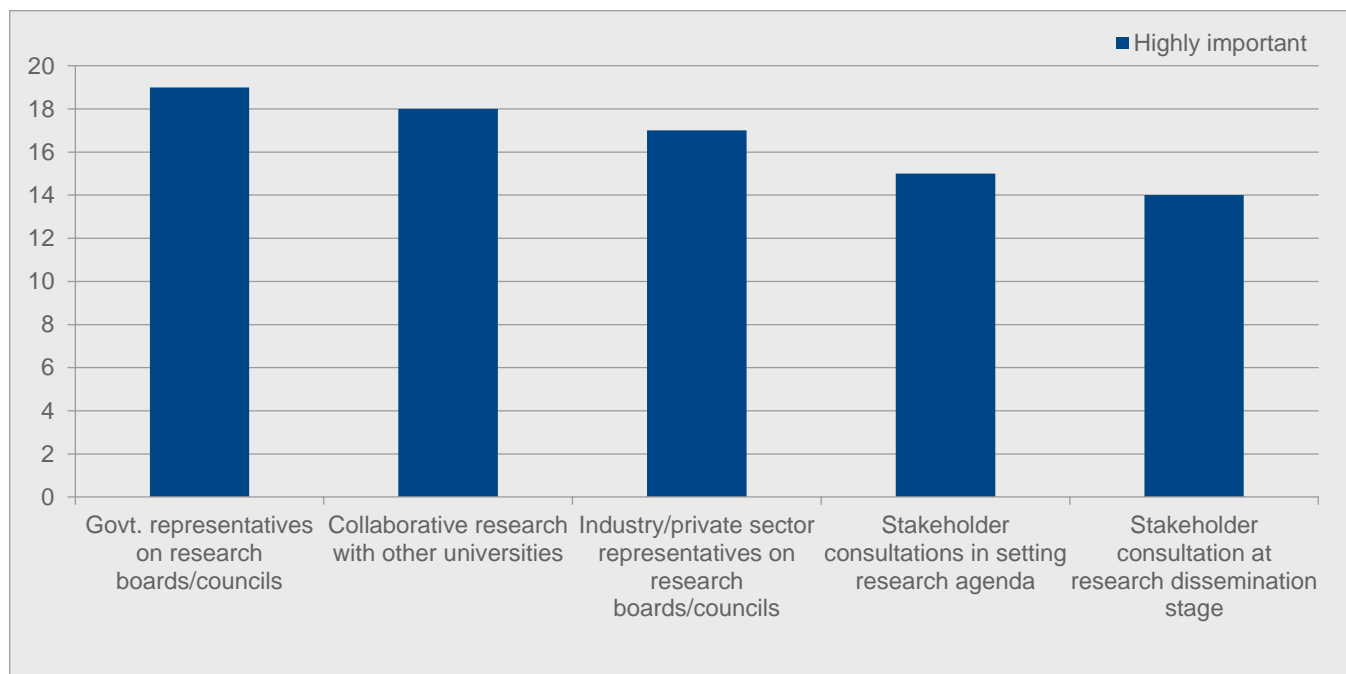


Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

- A majority of respondents (76%) indicated that their university provides training/resources to research active academic staff compared with 47% in 2012. Moreover, 76% of respondents reported that such training/resources are also provided to PhD students.

Section C: Stakeholder engagement

Figure 4: Top five mechanisms to engage with external stakeholders – 2016



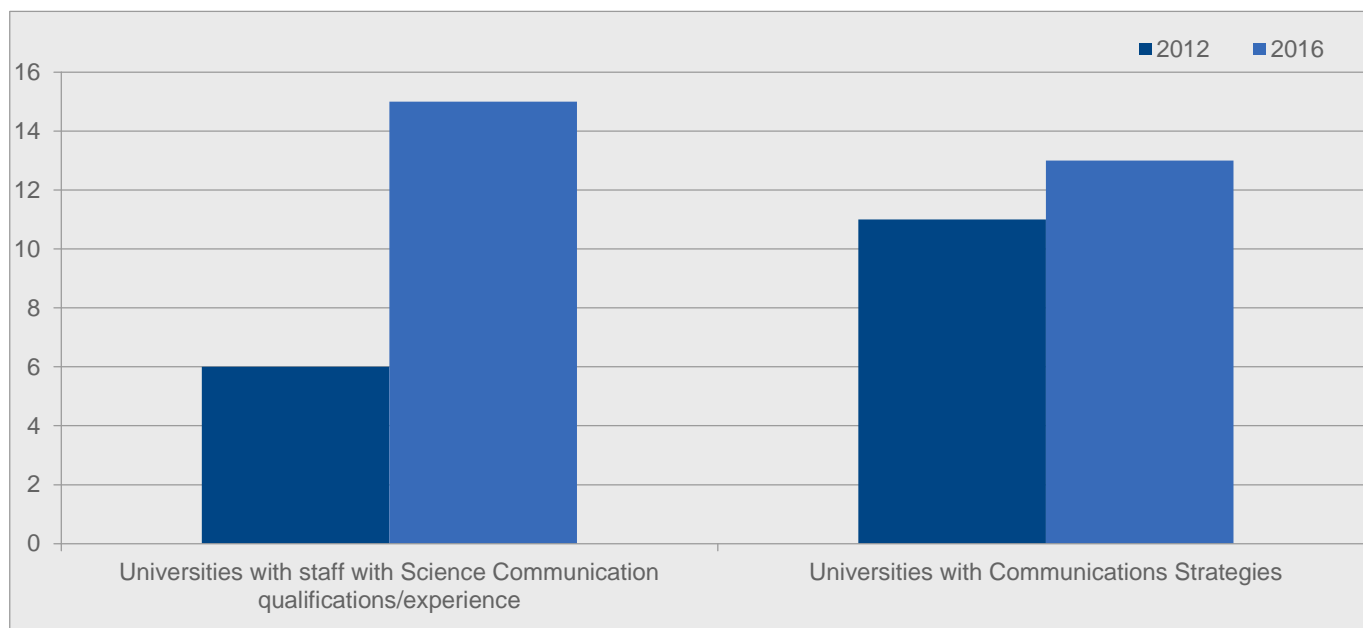
Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 21)

- Government ministries, departments and councils, research funders and donors, and enterprise and industry are given the highest priority as stakeholder. These are also associated with a perceived high level of influence on societal change and currently have strong relationships with universities.
- A majority of universities do not record or keep centralised records of research dissemination activities. However, a majority note that their university does keep some form of record of their research activities, either through institutional repositories or through annual reports.

Section D: Dissemination and communication of research

- All universities have central offices responsible for coordinating university publicity - however most of these are *not* exclusively concerned with research communication. At the same time, six universities reported that their research office has the main responsibility for communicating research findings to relevant stakeholders.

Figure 5: Dissemination and communication changes in DRUSSA universities – 2012-2016

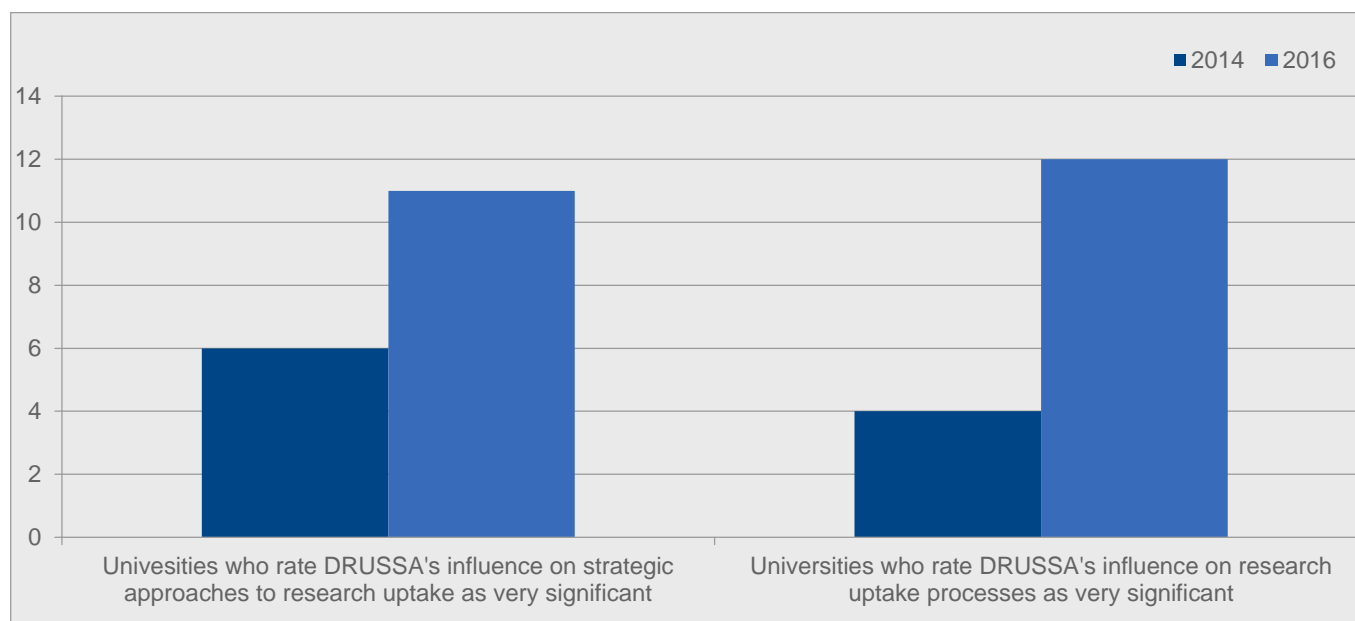


Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Section E: DRUSSA programme influence and sustainability

- A majority of respondents (65%) note that training provided as part of the DRUSSA programme (including workshops, short courses and MPhil and PhD programmes) has greatly benefitted both individual staff and their institutions, through the acquisition and dispersion of research uptake and science communication skills. A majority of respondents also note that continuous training/capacity building is one of the activities that is most likely to support sustainability of research uptake within their institutions once the programme has been completed.
- Respondents indicated that the main issues that may affect the sustainability of current research uptake processes and activities are: the availability of continuous funding and budgets for research staff and activities; and staff turnover at the senior management level, which could disrupt the process of institutionalising research uptake.

Figure 6: Perceived influence of DRUSSA on change in research uptake strategy and processes - 2014-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

DRUSSA Final Benchmarking Report 2016

Introduction

Analysis of responses to the third and final benchmarking survey of research uptake management in DRUSSA partner universities has provided key insights into how research and research uptake are approached at the institutional level, highlights examples of good practice and identifies some of the resilient challenges universities face in getting research findings to end users.

This Report analyses responses from the 2016 Benchmarking Survey while also providing a summary of discussions and resolutions from the 2016 Benchmarking and Leadership Conference. It provides an analysis of trends in institutional change across partner universities from the beginning through to the final period of the DRUSSA programme, drawing from data reported in 2012, 2014 and 2016.

We have been able to map evidence of change in various aspects of research uptake – strategy, processes, research communication, and stakeholder engagement – over the course of the programme. In addition, a final section of the 2016 survey examined the influence of the DRUSSA programme, and our analysis of responses to these questions identifies approaches to sustainability as well as remaining challenges to progress of research uptake in participating universities.

Methodology

As part of the exercise, universities responded to a comprehensive survey comprising:

- institutional priorities
- policies for research, staffing for research management and uptake
- current research and research uptake activities
- activities that will support the sustainability of research uptake

The 2016 survey was carried out between November 2015 and January 2016 and our analysis includes responses from all 22 participating universities.

For the three benchmarking exercises that have been carried out as part of the programme, we have used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The overall approach and reporting, however, is informed by “process benchmarking,” in which the end result is arrived at collaboratively.

To do this, we look at overall results using descriptive statistics. This measures year-on-year change as well as overall change from 2012-2016, tracking institutional progress against pre-defined measures. In addition, we identify themes and trends over time for the each research uptake theme by using thematic content analysis, which categorises responses under thematic headings. In each survey year, the analysis – both quantitative and qualitative – informs and feeds into a benchmarking conference, where results are explored with the participants. This gives participants a chance to elaborate on their responses and us a chance to interrogate results further. The discussions and resolutions that are agreed, together with the initial analysis, feed back into the final report of change/progress.

The analysis of trends and change over time, as well as references to sample size in figures and tables, considers valid responses (i.e. it does not include non-responses). Whilst a majority of universities have

participated in all three surveys, the sample size for individual questions does not always correspond with the number of universities participating in the survey. In addition, some new questions were incorporated into the survey in 2014, and therefore analysis of results to these questions does not include any data from 2012. It should also be noted that the number of universities participating in the programme has changed since 2012, from 24 to 22. This factors in the merger of two former universities into a single national university (the University of Rwanda). For the formerly independent universities, we have amalgamated their previous responses, treating them as one university in our representation of the historical data. For the purposes of this report, we have also kept information taken from the survey responses anonymous, highlighting some of the commonalities and distinctions between responses without identifying the respondents directly.

How the report is structured

This report is organised into seven main sections and draws on major trends from the survey responses, providing evidence of change between 2012 and 2016.

Section 1, **Benchmarking by region**, provides an overview of regional change in member universities between 2012 and 2016.

Section 2 considers the thematic areas of research uptake management as outlined in the survey sections, beginning with **Research uptake strategy**. This section covers key areas of university management, structures, and functions relating to the communication and uptake of research. It continues to be more focused on top-level support for research uptake compared with the first survey, which sought to provide a broader overview of how research uptake was organised at each university.

Section 3, **Research uptake processes**, looks at how university processes work to communicate research results, including how results are prepared and assessed for the intended end users of the research. This section has shifted focus towards assessing the impact of research on end users, as opposed to issues of intellectual property and commercialisation.

Section 4; **Stakeholder engagement** aims to determine university procedures in engaging external stakeholders, looking more closely at the relationships universities seek to develop with key stakeholders in order to drive research results into policy and practice.

Section 5; **Disseminating and Communicating research** addresses university processes applied in communicating research to the wider public (rather than specific stakeholders) in order to raise the profile of the university.

Section 6 considers the level of **Influence** that the DRUSSA programme is perceived by universities to have had on various areas of research uptake. It also looks at specific initiatives and activities of the DRUSSA programme and how the most useful of these could **sustainably** be carried forward by participating universities and what would be required to enable universities to do so.

Section 7 is a summary of **DRUSSA's Action Plan Initiative**. It details the planning support structures introduced by the programme and the diverse ways in which the member universities have engaged with them. It explores the benefits that have accrued from fostering a fluid and flexible approach to planning across disparate contexts. This section also introduces an element of monitoring and evaluation developed by the programme specifically for the Action Plan Initiative. The Critical Success Indicators (CSIs) are an example of a set of concrete goals towards which university Action Plans can aim, and are designed to assist universities track the progress of their Action Plans over time.

Section 8; **Conclusion and recommendations** aims to support universities further by highlighting areas of strength and weakness, and by considering where to direct efforts to support the operationalisation and sustainability of priority areas, particularly in light of the completion of the programme.

1. Benchmarking by region

This section provides an overview and analysis of the 2016 benchmarking data from a regional perspective.

For the inaugural DRUSSA Benchmarking Conference in 2012, universities were grouped into collaborative sessions based on region (West African, East African and Southern African) over the course of the three-day event. At this stage in the programme, the regional framework was seen as a natural approach to sharing experience and planning for activities over the course of the programme.

For the 2014 Leadership and Benchmarking Conference, the structure of the event shifted towards a thematic focus, reflecting the thematic focus areas of the survey itself: research uptake strategy, research uptake processes, stakeholder engagement and research communication. This shift allowed delegates to participate in sessions specific to their particular area of interest, based on evolving activity in research uptake writ large.

The 2016 Leadership and Benchmarking Conference also maintained a principally thematic approach. This decision was based on feedback from the 2014 event, in which universities stated that the thematic approach assisted in focusing attention on specific strands of research uptake that most closely related to their institutions' priorities.

There remains, however, considerable value in analysing the benchmarking survey data from a regional perspective. The accommodation of a regional component within the current programme allows for comparative discussions and for progress to be measured within original (2012) groups. It also permits the programme to factor in any national or regional changes to the higher education landscape overall, and identify the possible impact of these changes on developments in research uptake management.

The section below adopts a regional lens in summarising data trends across the three benchmarking surveys from 2012 to 2016, before moving on to the thematic focus in later sections.

East Africa

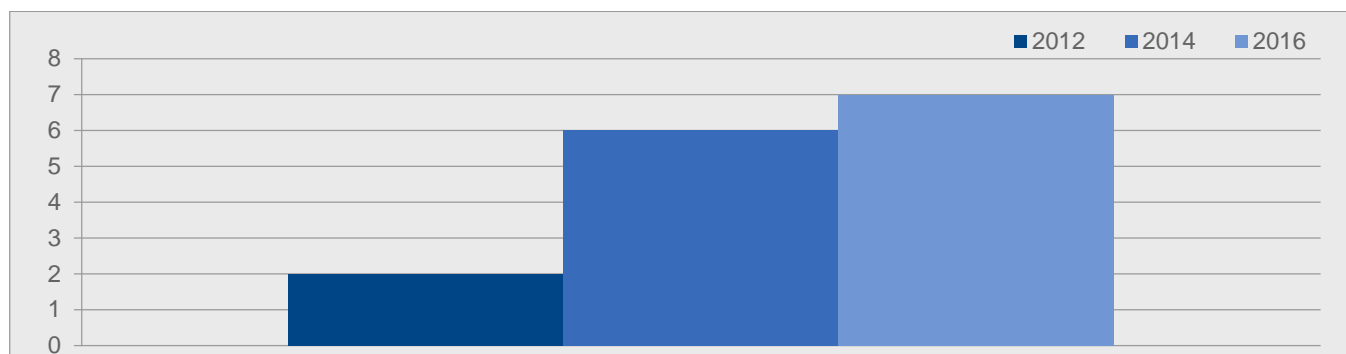
Please note that, of the original nine participating universities in the East African region, two institutions – Kigali Health Institute and National University of Rwanda – have since merged into the University of Rwanda. For the purposes of comparing datasets in 2012 and 2014, the programme analysed data submitted by the two pre-merger Rwandan institutions. The current survey, however, only considers data submitted by the single, newly-merged institution, and has compared it to merged data for 2012 and 2014.

Research uptake strategy

Survey data demonstrates that the East African cohort started from a strong base in terms of strategic approaches to research. This emphasis on strategy has been maintained over the course of the programme, but has also been gradually refined over the five year period to draw research uptake activities into the broader strategic outlooks of the universities concerned.

The establishment of research strategies is widespread among the East African group. All universities reported that they had a strategy for research in place in 2014. This unanimity was maintained into 2016. Over the course of the programme, however, as the policies have been refined and updated, there has been a significant increase in the emphasis each of these policies place on getting research into use.

Figure 7: Emphasis on research uptake in research policies in East African universities – 2012-2016

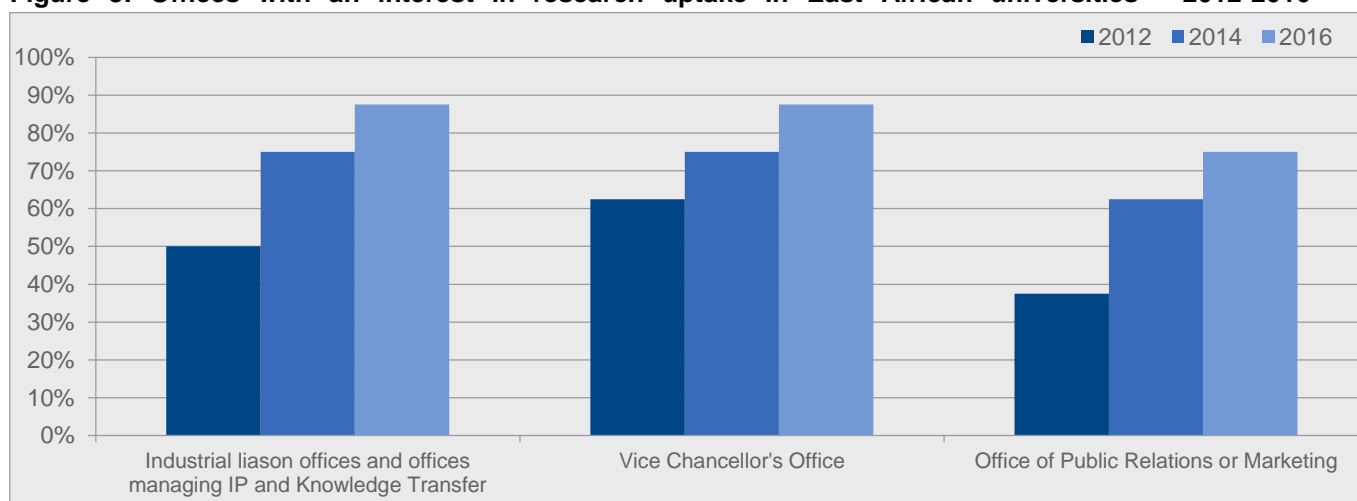


Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 4); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 8); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 7)

As was the case in 2014, all but one university reported in 2016 that they have offices or posts in place with responsibility for communicating research and/or getting research into use. In 2012, six universities stated that they had incentives in place to encourage staff/academic departments to develop relationships with potential consumers of research external to the university. Although this number did not rise in 2016, a further two universities have reported that they are currently in the process of developing such incentives.

It would appear that these developments are having a positive effect. When asked to consider the cooperation and communication of university units with an interest in research uptake, all universities reported that this had improved since 2012 and, as of 2016, six indicated that this had 'improved significantly'. This increased interest is located most markedly in units with responsibility for managing intellectual property, offices for public relations and within the office of the Vice-Chancellor.

Figure 8: Offices with an interest in research uptake in East African universities - 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 8); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 8); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 8)

Research uptake processes

There has been significant change in approaches to research uptake processes among the East African universities since 2012. Previously, only one university reported that it had mechanisms to assess the wider impact of university research. This grew to four universities in 2014 and seven universities in 2016. These new

mechanisms include research staff evaluation surveys, annual research dissemination conferences and events, and evaluation frameworks designed within existing DRUSSA implementation teams.

Another area of noteworthy change is in training. There has been a 200% increase in the number of universities in the region, from 2012 to 2016, who provide training/resources for research active staff to engage in research uptake activities. Amongst these, five universities reported that this training was made available to post-graduate students. The training typically includes assistance for staff in identifying stakeholder needs and in developing research uptake plans.

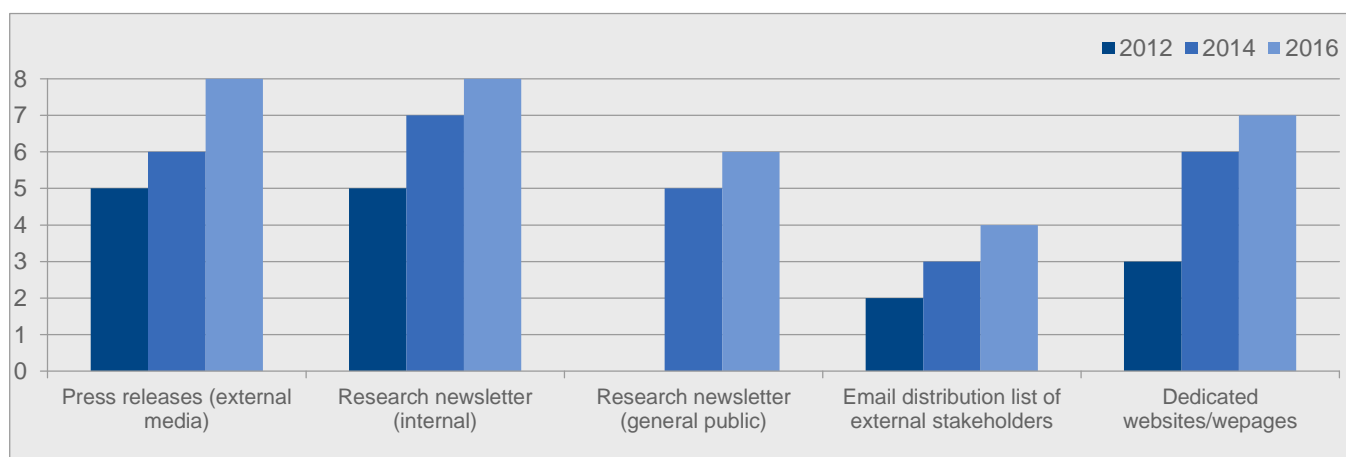
Disseminating and communicating research

Data suggests that systemised approaches to communicating research are well in place in participating universities in East Africa. Five universities reported in 2012 that they had dedicated public relations offices with staff trained in PR. This grew to six by 2014 and was maintained at this higher level in 2016.

This having been said, the changing profile to research communication channels employed by the East African universities, relative to 2012, also demonstrates a gradual shift in practice. For example, a number of universities have introduced mechanisms to track staff members with media experience and who are willing to publicly comment on research findings. As this information has emerged, more universities are engaging with a larger number of external stakeholders, and they are doing so in different ways.

- more universities are engaging with stakeholders directly via email.
- more universities are producing research newsletters.
- more universities are developing dedicated research websites.
- all universities are producing press releases for external media outlets.

Figure 9: Communication channels used in East African universities – 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 7); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 8); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 8)

Conference discussion

The representatives of the Eastern regional universities observed that positive change over the period of the programme has been uniformly steady, representing a smooth, upward swing. The engagement with DRUSSA training and access to DRUSSA training materials on good practice were having a positive effect on staffing capacity. One of the major impacts of this has been the revision of policies at a number of universities to place a greater focus on research uptake activities. This, in turn, has supported the foundation of offices and/or staff with research uptake responsibilities in some universities.

Staff turnover was identified as one of the primary challenges to further embedding research uptake into the culture of the universities. Universities believed that placing a greater emphasis on research uptake training for early career academics, including a focus on mentoring and on curriculum development to include research uptake elements.

The lack of funding was also identified as an impediment to further and sustained research uptake activity. While it was recognised that international funding opportunities do reward institutions that are able to demonstrate research uptake, many internally funded and nationally funded research opportunities do not. It was believed that this needs to be addressed to support the routinisation of research uptake activities and approaches within the universities.

Southern Africa

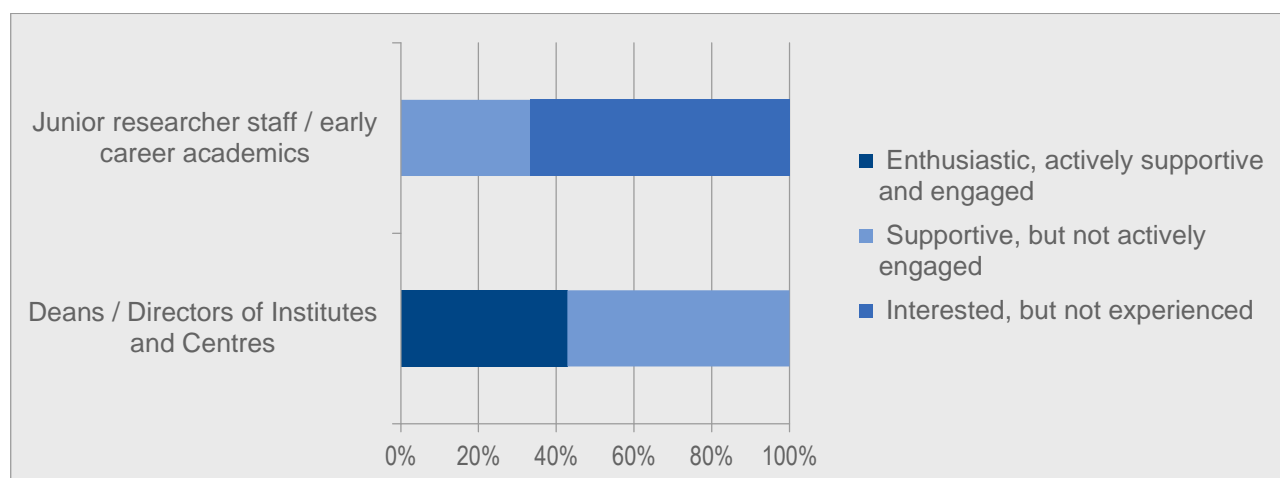
Research uptake strategy

As was the case in the East, the Southern African universities have demonstrated a strong base in strategic approaches to research. Six of the seven universities in the region had research strategies in 2012. This increased to all seven in 2014, a figure which was maintained in 2016. These strategies also developed to include a new focus on research uptake activities over the period of the DRUSSA programme. In 2012, five universities confirmed that their research strategies did *not* have an uptake component or emphasis. By 2014, however, all universities in this region reported having embedded uptake into their strategic documents.

All universities in the Southern group now also have specific posts or offices with responsibilities for research uptake. This grew from the three universities reported in 2012 and six reported in 2014. This has coincided with a significant increase in the number of universities with incentives for staff to develop relationships with external stakeholders, which grew from two universities in 2012 to six in 2016.

External advisory boards, commercial services units and Vice-Chancellor's offices have been indicated as having an increased interest in research uptake activities compared to 2012. Areas that need further attention in the future include Deans and Heads of institutes, the majority of whom are supportive, but not *actively* engaged in research uptake and early career academics who are either not actively engaged in research uptake or lack experience in the subject.

Figure 10: University staff attitudes towards research uptake in Southern African universities – 2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 7)

Research uptake processes

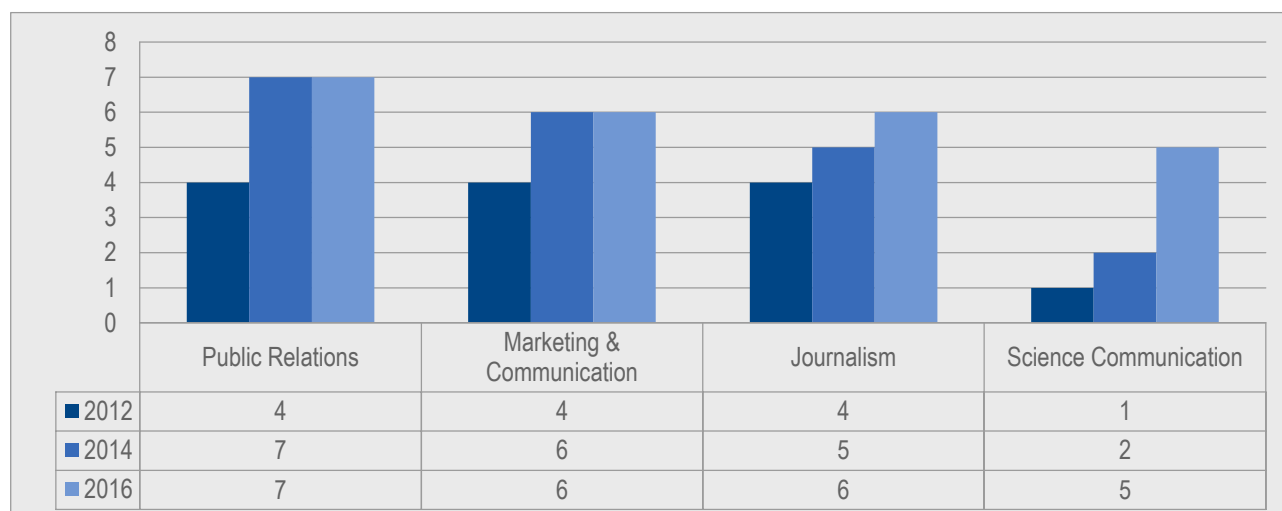
Over the course of the programme, the seven universities from the Southern region have made a number of gains in implementing changes to research uptake processes. Some universities have started to monitor the distribution of funds and the productivity of research at the institution, as well as the amount of external and internal collaboration between projects. At least one university reports that research funding is now more focused towards impact and problem solving than only funding research to do research, as was the case prior to the programme. Moreover, research uptake is starting to be introduced as a standing item on the agenda of Senate research committee meetings.

Yet the changes being developed are not without their challenges. For example, there remain difficulties in capturing the full extent of research uptake activities and capabilities across institutions. There is also an acknowledgement that, while university level policies and strategies may emphasise research uptake, changes in behaviour and attitudes amongst individual academics and departments towards engaging in research uptake activities continue unevenly. Pockets of good practice (typically research management offices and technology-transfer offices) and areas of resistance (human resources and staff development offices) will both continue to work closely with units transitioning towards greater engagement with research uptake (libraries and alumni offices) as the support structures within the universities mature over time.

Disseminating and communicating research

Southern African universities reported growth in the level of training and skills of key personnel working in areas of research uptake, particularly in offices of public relations. In 2012, four respondents told us their offices responsible for publicising university research had staff trained in PR – by 2014; all seven universities reported their offices had staff with this training. Six respondents told us in 2014 that their staff also had training in marketing (up from five in 2012), and five reported staff with training in journalism (up from four in 2012). In 2016 the main area of improvement was in science communication training, with five universities reporting the presence of trained staff – up from one university in 2012 and two in 2014.

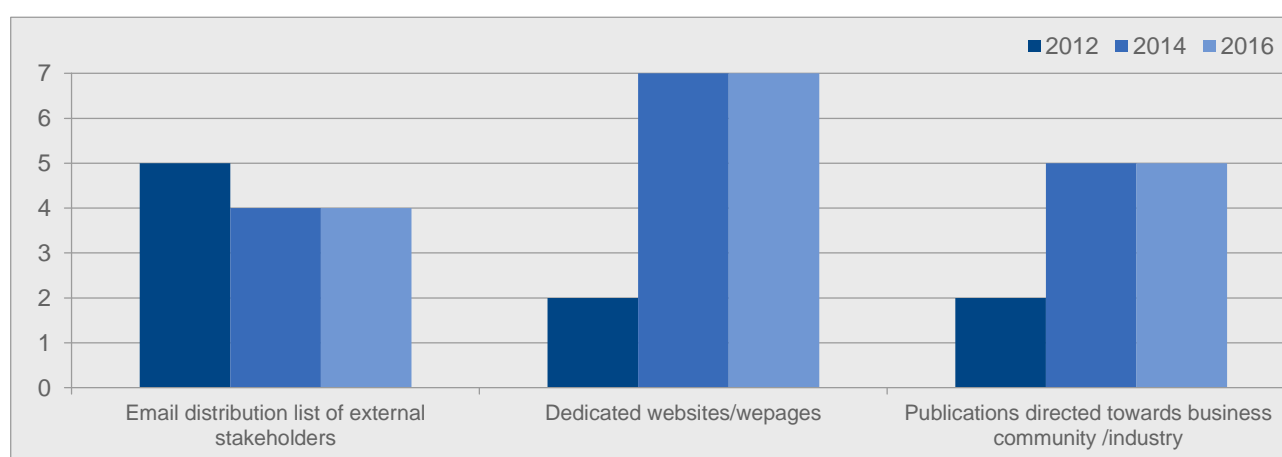
Figure 11: Qualifications/experience of research uptake related areas in Southern African universities – 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 4); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 7); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 7)

The most commonly used medium for research dissemination amongst the Southern African universities is via dedicated pages on the institutional websites. All of the universities in the region list this as their favoured method of dissemination. This is a significant change in practice from 2012, where less than half of the universities engaged with end users in this way. Similarly, the use of publications directed towards the business community have emerged as a more favoured method of dissemination when compared to practices reported in 2012. The use of direct email communication with external stakeholders has, however, declined since 2012. Taken as a whole, this reflects a movement away from targeted engagement with known external stakeholders towards a greater engagement with platforms that allow universities to engage with a greater number of potential stakeholders simultaneously.

Figure 12: Communication channels used in Southern African universities – 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 6); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 7); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 7)

Conference discussion

The universities from the Southern region identified four points of positive change that occurred since the start of the programme in 2012. It was noted that, although most universities in the region already had references to research dissemination and community service within their institutional policy documents in 2012, senior managers are now more demanding of policies that address research uptake. Most of the universities in the region had reviewed their respective policies over the course of their participation in DRUSSA and, drawing on lessons learnt, refined the scope and nature of research uptake within policy documents to incorporate issues such as: stakeholder mapping and engagement; reward structures for research uptake activities, and; designated offices with research uptake responsibilities. These changes at strategy and policy level were identified as a product of three other interlocking elements of major change:

- **improved staff capacity to engage with research uptake** through training delivered as part of the programme
- the concomitant **improvement in institutional knowledge of research uptake good practice**, and
- an **improved awareness of stakeholder engagement approaches and techniques**.

The outstanding challenge remaining for the universities in this region was identified as the lack of appropriate tools for measuring research uptake success. This negatively impacts on the ability of individuals to demonstrate the value of research uptake activities to their institution, and of institutions to demonstrate the value of their research to funding bodies and the community at large. Without such measures it was observed that career progress would continue to be heavily linked to academic publications and funding for research uptake activities would continue to be difficult to justify.

With this in mind, when asked where they want to be in five years, the universities identified the development and adoption of approaches for the monitoring and evaluation of research uptake. In order to get to that point, the universities believed that existing networks, such as the Research and Innovation Management Associations (RIMAs) and DRUSSA colleagues, could be leveraged to address the issue, and that funding calls should be proposed that promote community engagement as a branch of scholarship. The universities also believed that a research uptake culture needed to be embedded within universities, and that this could be fostered through strong support structures for early career academics, including mentoring and a focus on research uptake within curricula.

West Africa

Research uptake strategy

As of 2016, all DRUSSA universities in West Africa reported having research strategies in place. Yet these strategies have not remained static over this time. As a result of periodic review and revision, four of the universities' strategies now place an emphasis on research uptake, where only two had done so in 2012. Furthermore, all seven universities report that they have offices in place with the responsibility for communicating research and mechanisms for developing partnerships with external stakeholders, where previously only four universities had reported having such structures.

In terms of overall university priorities, teaching and research have remained the most important areas of focus over the course of the programme, consistent with overall findings. This having been said, in West Africa specifically, the priority given to externally funded research, outreach and extension and establishing relationships with potential consumers of research has increased markedly since 2012. The change in

reported priorities towards research uptake activities has coincided with increased interest in such activities within research management offices, extension offices, industrial liaison offices and Vice-Chancellors' offices. It has also triggered the emergence of interest in such activities in human resource offices, ICT offices and alumni offices, where none was previously recorded in 2012.

Research uptake processes

There have been modest gains in the development of mechanisms to assess the wider dissemination and impact of university research since 2012. Overall numbers, however, remain relatively low. Only three universities have systems in place to obtain feedback from external stakeholders regarding the research they produce. Yet there has been a healthier increase in the number of universities providing training and/or resources for research active staff to engage in research uptake – up to five in 2016 from two in 2012.

In addition to funding constraints and heavy workloads, issues shared by the majority of universities within the programme, the universities from West Africa reported specifically that outmoded incentive systems did little to encourage the growth of a research uptake culture. They also stated that the internal coordination of research information within the university continued to pose challenges. Similar challenges were reported among respondents in each of the three regions, suggesting that both gathering research outputs from across departments and faculties, and communicating these results under an institutionalised system, attests to the complexity of building truly comprehensive research uptake management systems.

Disseminating and communicating research

The qualifications and experience of staff in research uptake related skills rose over the period of the programme, with the highest increases reported in journalism and science communication skills. This has coincided with a reported change in the preferred methods of disseminating research. Direct communication via email with external stakeholders, the development of dedicated research web pages within the university and the placement of research outputs in publications directed towards the business community have all increased in use since 2012. Although the publication of conference papers remains the most common channel for research dissemination amongst universities from West Africa, media press releases, open days and research newsletters were also reported as common in 2016.

Conference discussion

Representatives from the Western region observed measured change within policy and management structures at their respective universities. In most cases, research uptake elements have been approved as aspects of current policies. This has been followed in a few instances with the introduction of units within the universities to act as focus points for the broader dissemination of DRUSSA training amongst staff and to support nascent research uptake activities. The introduction of these structures are anticipated to have an impact on the universities' research practices and culture after the programme comes to a close.

The primary barrier to the introduction of further changes over the course of the programme was unanimously identified as a lack of internal funding allocations for specific research uptake activities. This impacted on the potential implementation of further areas of DRUSSA good practice examples. The universities of this region also noted that they had experienced significant staff turnover at the senior management level, which impeded efforts to sensitise and secure the buy-in of other senior university decision makers. This point was emphasised, by universities that have undertaken, or will soon undertake, changes in their Vice-Chancellor.

The universities concurred that it would be beneficial if, over the next five years, it were possible to introduce research uptake training into postgraduate curricula and new staff induction training. It was felt that these would represent concrete steps that would translate the aspirations of the structural changes, witnessed under

DRUSSA, into embedded cultural change amongst students and academics to recognise the importance of research uptake.

2. Research uptake strategy

In this section, we move from a regional to a thematic analysis in which each of the four themes covered in the survey (research uptake strategy, research uptake processes, stakeholder engagement, and communicating research) are explored in greater depth.

Overall, the responses indicate a strengthening of research uptake in participating universities through the incorporation of research uptake in strategies and the development of practical plans to support and implement these. The responses also note that participants perceive strong support for research uptake from university leadership, which has increased between 2012 and 2016. University leadership support and engagement is evident in the development of structures and processes to support the communication of research results to external stakeholders. This includes the (re)allocation of resources for research uptake (offices/staff/activities/training/funds) and increased prioritisation of, and active involvement in, research uptake activities by university management.

Research strategy

The results of the 2016 survey have revealed a view that research uptake is considered to be an integral part of the overall research process and should therefore be incorporated into a university's overall research policy/strategy, rather than form a stand-alone strategy. All universities participating in the programme have overall research strategies, including two universities whose strategies were in development when the first survey was conducted in 2012, and a majority of universities (90%) indicate that these research strategies include an emphasis/focus on research uptake. Information gathered from other programme activities, such as benchmarking event discussions, reinforce these findings. This is a significant increase compared with 2012, when only five universities indicated that their policies considered research uptake, and with most universities leaving no response.

A majority of universities (70%) in 2016 also note that their research policies are complemented by practical strategies or plans to support the implementation of research uptake activities. These are articulated in various ways, such as the inclusion of research uptake in the assessment of applications for internal research funds and in the evaluation of academic staff for promotion, investment in science communication and media training for researchers and research administrators, or the direct inclusion of research uptake as a key strategic pillar in the university's research strategy or institutional strategic plan.

Research uptake structures

Offices/posts dedicated to research uptake

The development of policies and practical strategies for research uptake is closely related to the development of supporting structures for these activities. There is a reported increase (33.5%) in the number of offices and/or posts dedicated to research uptake since 2012. In 2016, almost all universities (21), compared to 13 in 2012, indicated that their institution has offices, units, or staff responsible for the communication of research results. This increase can be accounted for in a variety of ways: some universities have set up new offices or appointed new staff, whilst others have strengthened or restructured existing offices; others have done a combination of both. Of those universities noting that they have offices to support research uptake, a majority indicate that they have one or more central offices working together. In 2016, we introduced a question on the level of cooperation between offices/staff engaged in research uptake, and over half (59%) indicated that this

has improved significantly since 2012. This is exemplified by investment in new offices/staff, access to funding for staff development (both academics and administrative staff), a clarification of strategy and roles and overall increased awareness of the importance of research uptake. In a similar vein, many universities note a positive relationship between offices/staff and researchers, noting that the main role of these offices is to support researchers in reaching out to their intended beneficiaries.

Offices with an interest in research uptake

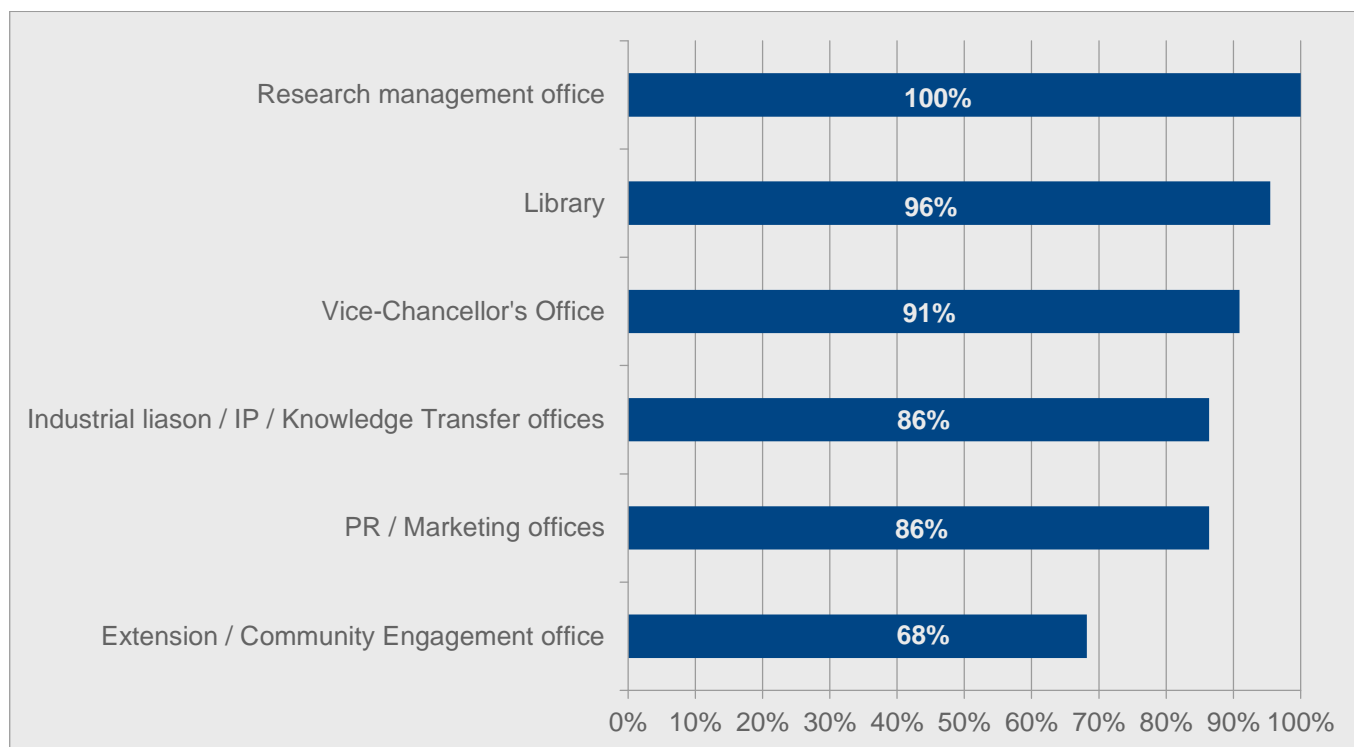
The survey asked participants to indicate which offices – in their view – have an interest in research uptake: offices that *could* have a role to play in communicating research results, whether this has been formally recognised or not.

The research management office, the library, and the PR/Marketing office were the three offices most often cited as having an interest in research uptake in all three surveys. In 2016, the Vice-Chancellor's office entered the top three offices cited as having interest in research uptake, with 20 universities stating the importance of the Vice-Chancellor's office in communicating research; concomitantly, the same number of universities note that their university leadership is 'Enthusiastic, actively supportive and engaged' in research uptake. This could be related to many new and existing directorates of research (or similar offices) reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor's office.

"Prior to the DRUSSA programme, the modalities of Research Uptake were via various forms e.g. uncoordinated dissemination, technology transfers in some cases etc. However, with the implementation of a clear strategy and associated tactics, the level of cooperation has certainly improved between various support staff and researchers." – 2016 Survey response

Since 2012, there has also been a significant increase in universities indicating that their industrial liaison office or offices managing intellectual property and/or knowledge transfer/exchange have an interest in research uptake. In this context, a few universities noted that their institutions include the considerations of industry when planning research goals and projects, through policies, guidelines, strategies, and advisory groups. There has also been a considerable increase in the importance placed on external advice and commercial services-related offices: 41% of the participating universities indicated that external advisory boards/commercial services have an interest in research uptake, compared to 19% in 2012, which is significant considering the low base line.

Figure 13: Offices with an interest in research uptake – 2016

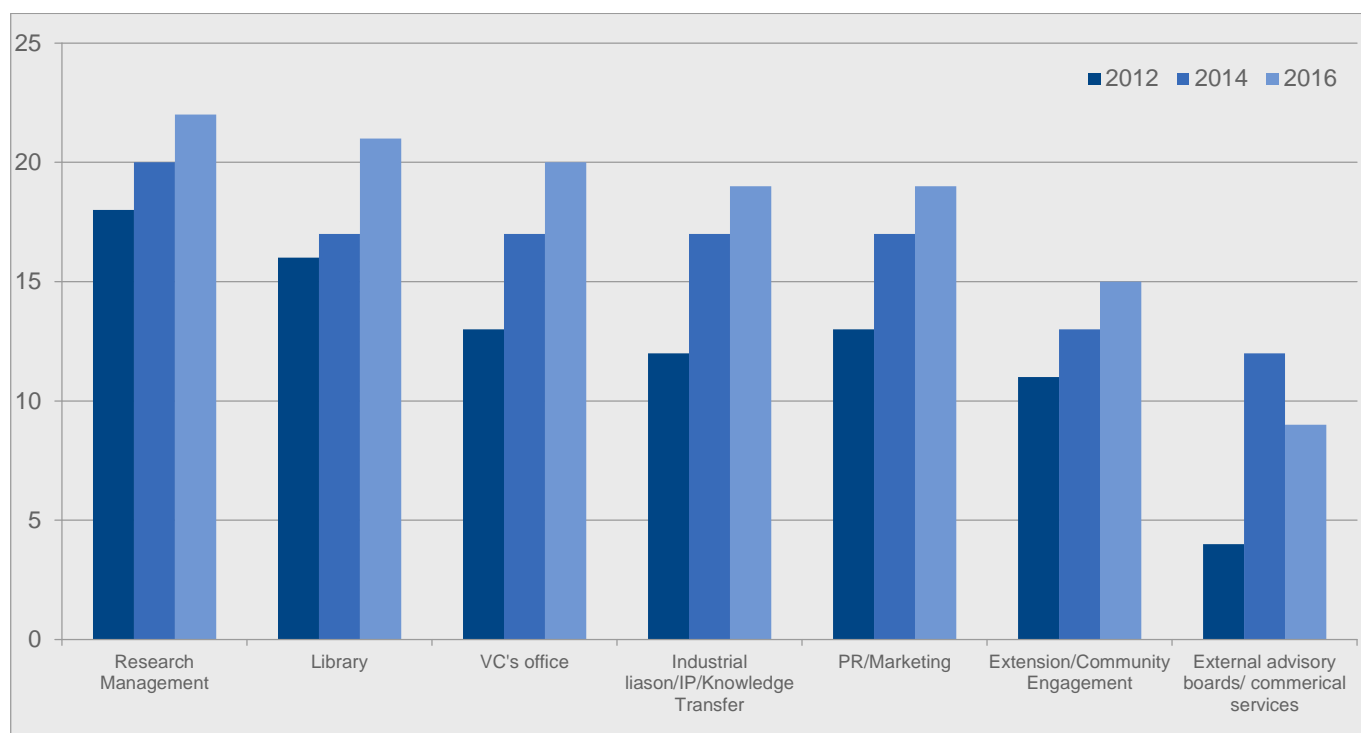


Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Figure 13 shows the top six offices noted as having an interest in research uptake. All universities indicated that the research management office has an interest in communication research results. This is closely followed by the library, the Vice-Chancellor's office, the PR/marketing office and industrial liaison/IP/knowledge transfer/knowledge exchange offices.

Figure 14 shows the change from 2012-2016, with the largest increase can be noted for the Vice-Chancellor's office and industrial liaison/IP/knowledge transfer/knowledge exchange offices, followed by the PR/Marketing Office, external advisory boards/commercial services and the library.

Figure 14: Offices with an interest in research uptake – 2012-2016



Sources: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

As was the case in 2012, respondents in 2016 indicated that extension and community engagement offices have a lower level of interest in research uptake when compared to the other five offices listed. Though perhaps surprising, reasons for this may include the absence of extension offices across the sample, or that research uptake is primarily driven through research management, public relations, or industrial liaison and technology transfer structures, suggesting varied interpretations of the scope of what is considered 'research uptake' across participating universities.

The highest growth in interest is reported for the Vice-Chancellor's office, and industrial liaison and technology transfer structures, which both increased by seven universities between 2012 and 2016.

In 2014, we introduced a number of additional offices as options for respondents to select from in the survey, and of these, over half (59%) indicate that the ICT office has an interest in research uptake; at the same time an increase in the perceived support for research uptake among this staff group can be noted since 2012.

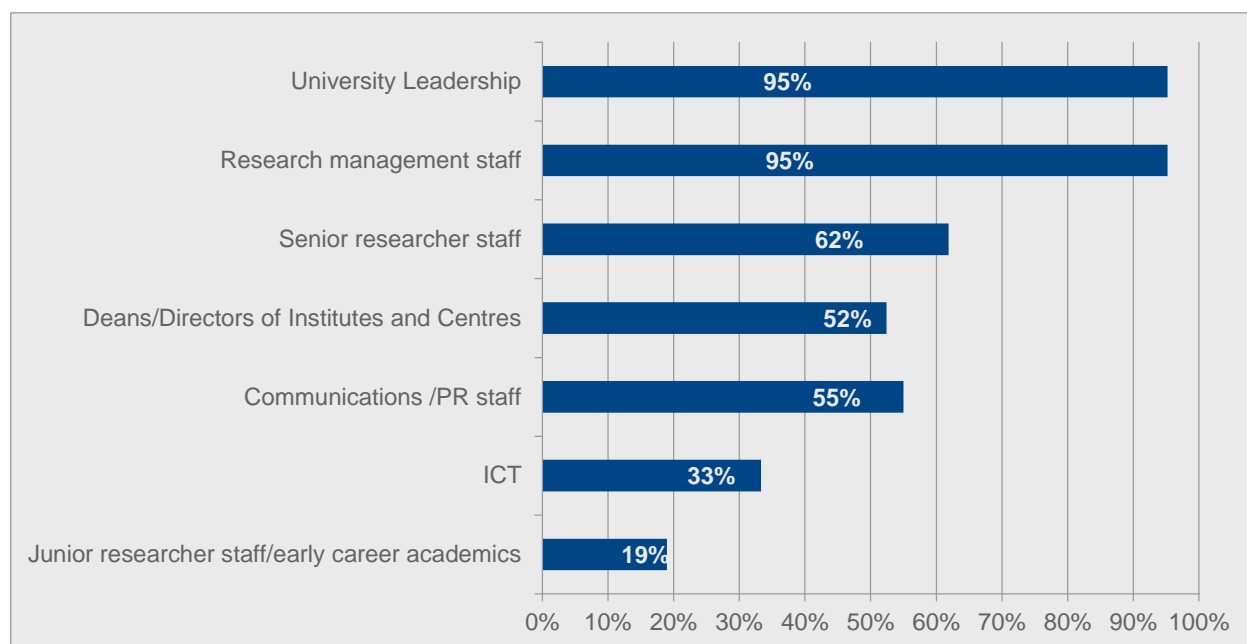
While growth in interest in research uptake changed across the office types and years listed in **Figure 14**, we have nevertheless seen a growth in interest across all offices, as none of the offices reported that interest in research uptake had diminished over the course of the entire programme (2012-2016). However, whilst the importance given to external advisory boards/commercial services remains relatively high, it is lower than indicated in 2014.

Attitudes towards research uptake

In 2014, a new question enquired about university staff attitudes towards research uptake within each university. We also asked participants to retrospectively indicate attitudes at the beginning of the programme (2012), if these were known. **Figure 15** shows that participants indicated that their university

leadership/principal officers and research management staff are the most enthusiastic and actively supportive of research uptake, followed by senior research staff.

Figure 15: Enthusiastic, actively supportive, and engaged attitudes towards research uptake – 2016

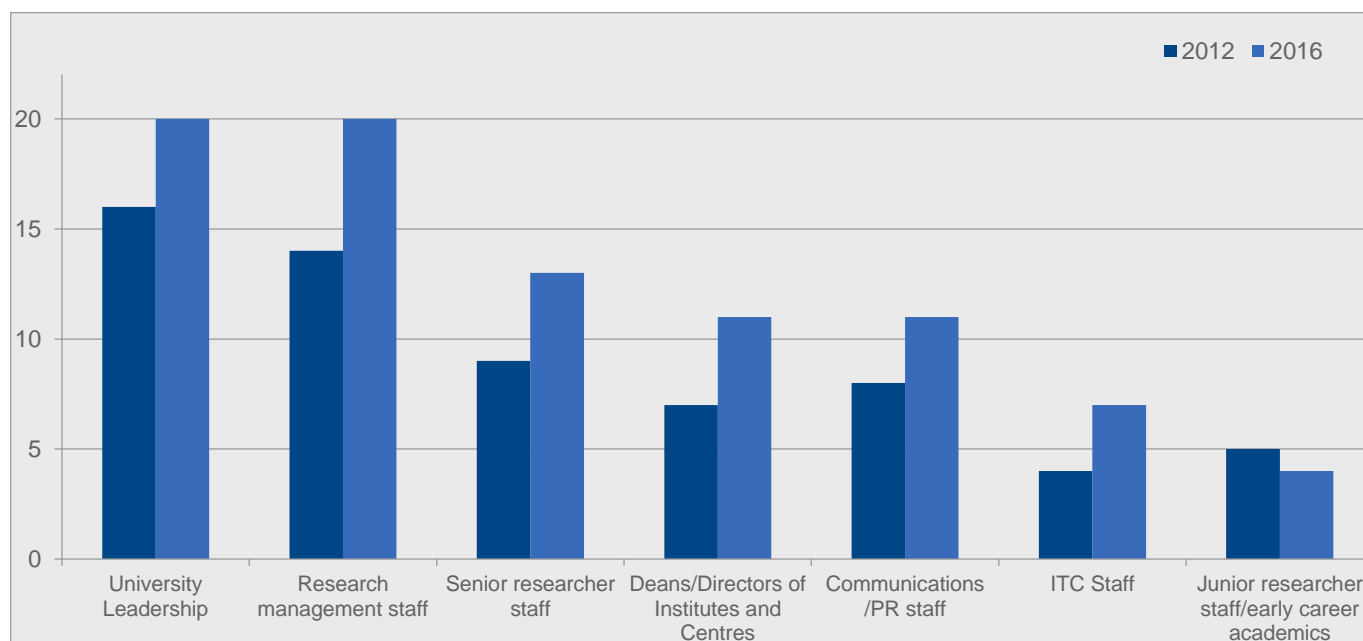


Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Very few respondents said that staff are negative towards research uptake, however quite a few noted that staff are interested yet do not have skills or experience of the area. For example, a third of junior research staff are indicated as being supportive of research uptake, but not actively engaged in research uptake activities.

Figure 16 shows the change from in attitudes 2012-2016. Since the beginning of the programme, positive changes in university staff attitudes towards research uptake were noted for all staff categories except one (junior research staff), with respondents indicating an improvement in staff attitudes as well as more active involvement in research uptake activities. This is particularly noticeable among university leadership staff and research management staff. It is also noticeable among senior research staff, Deans and Heads of institutes and communications and public relations staff, whereas in 2016, over half of respondents indicated that these staff groups were actively engaged in research uptake activities compared to less than half at the outset of the programme. Junior research staff was the only staff category where perceived *active* support declined since 2012, starting from a low base of 25%; at the same time, participants noted that early career academics have significant potential, but currently lack the skills and experience to productively engage in research uptake activities. This could potentially be related to junior research staff not receiving the same levels of exposure to research uptake activities and training as senior research and administrative staff.

Figure 16: Enthusiastic, actively supportive, and engaged attitudes towards research uptake – 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 20); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

In 2016, we also asked participants to provide evidence of attitudes towards research uptake among university staff, both positive and negative. Respondents provided a range of examples of increased or improved activity levels supporting research uptake, particularly among university leadership, Deans and Heads of institutes and senior research staff. Of those supplying evidence of staff attitudes, 72% note that their university leadership expresses support primarily through access to resources, including offices, staff, and funds for research uptake activities. This includes, for example, setting up committees for communicating research and committing their own time to promote research uptake to external stakeholders. These examples correspond to the increase in Vice-Chancellor offices' perceived interest in research uptake and the overall embedding of research uptake through research strategies and associated support structures.

Respondents also note that deans and directors provide support to their staff to engage in communicating their research to external stakeholders, for example at regional and national exhibitions and conferences and are themselves more actively involved in training of staff. The same is noted for senior research staff, and examples of activities include presenting on research at workshops/seminars and conferences, sharing research results in media (TV/radio) and mentoring junior researchers.

“A Research Uptake Strategy was developed in 2015 to complement existing policies (the Research Policy, Communications Policy, IP policy and the Open Access policy) in terms of ensuring that research undertaken at [the University] fully contributes towards local, regional, and International development. The strategy provides a guiding framework to systematically facilitate uptake of research outputs of the university.” – 2016 Survey response

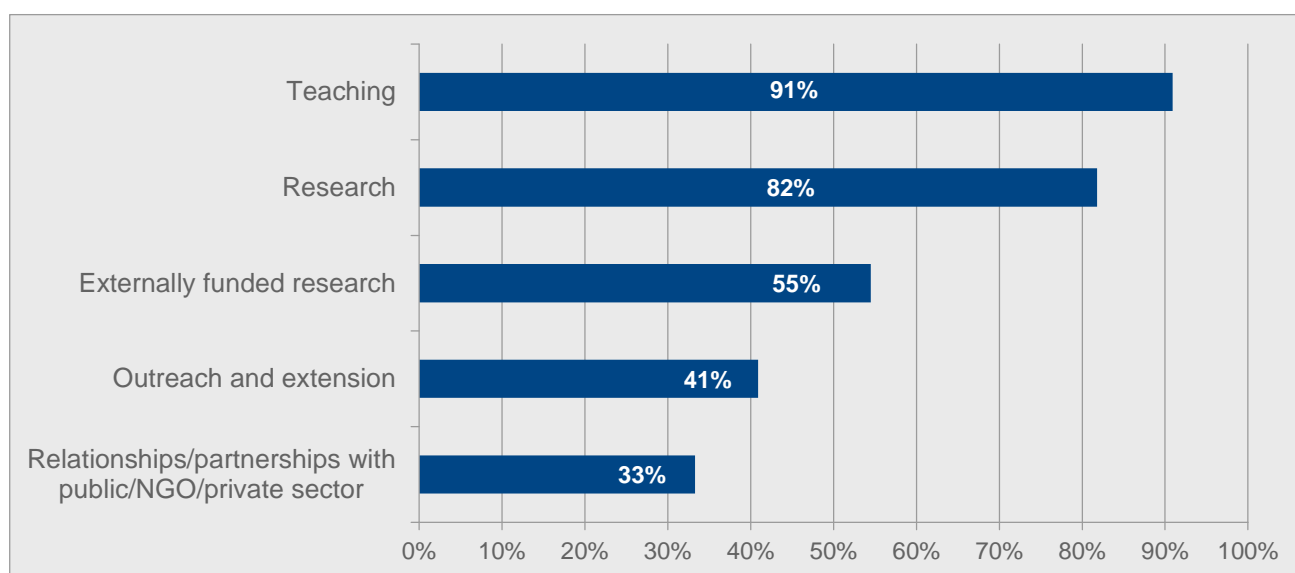
Finally, respondents said that communications and public relations and ICT staff have become more engaged in publicising research findings and regularly publish/share these both internally and externally as well as maintaining the university website section on research.

University priorities

Areas of university priority

As in 2012, teaching remains the top priority for universities responding to the 2016 survey, closely followed by research (general) and externally funded research. Contrary to the previous survey (2014), however, research (general) is given a higher priority than externally funded research.

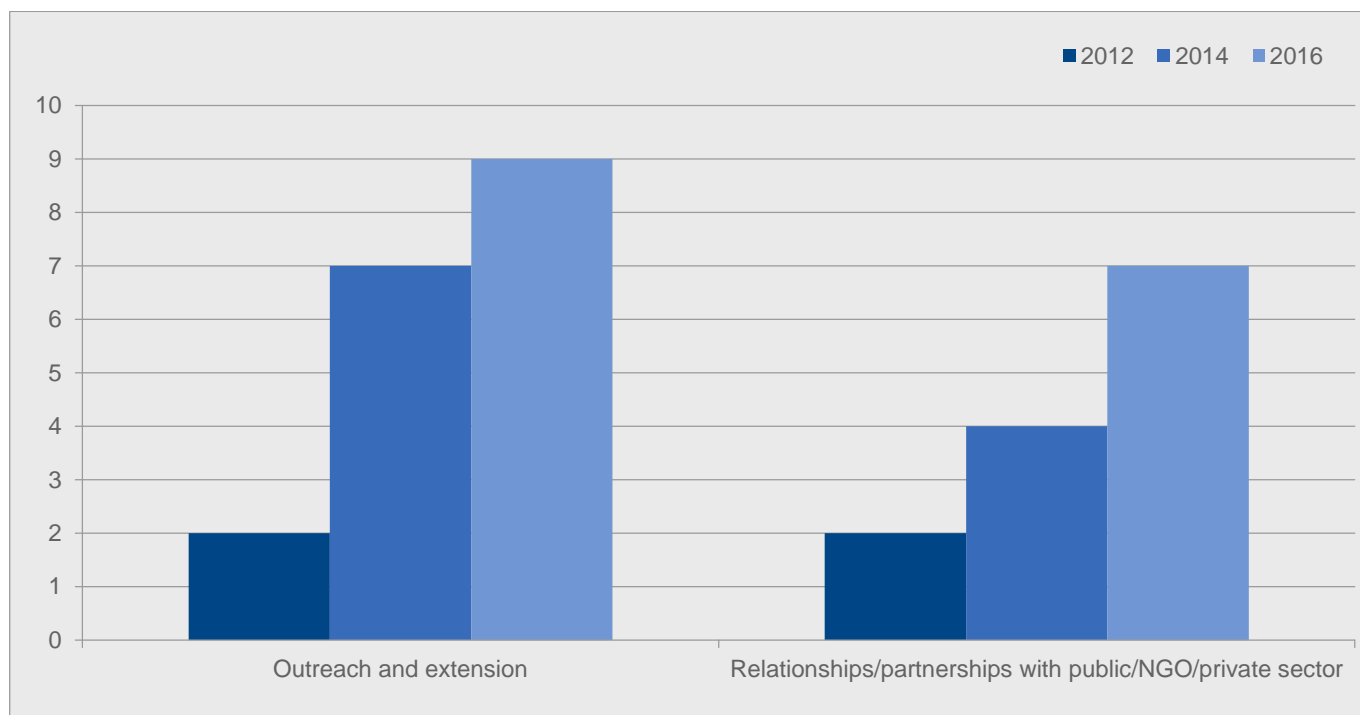
Figure 17: 'Very high' university priority areas – 2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Teaching, research, and community service form the core mission of most participating universities, and these are often used as assessable criteria in the promotion process. Notably, though, the latter is typically less stringently defined compared with teaching and research requirements. In light of this, it is interesting to see that the most noticeable change over the course of the programme is the large increase in prioritisation of outreach and extension and in respondents noting that relationships with external stakeholders are a very high priority for their university (see **Figure 18** below). These findings match results noted below, by which universities are formally including community service activities as promotion criteria and making access to internal research funding contingent on the inclusion of research uptake plans/activities in research project planning.

Figure 18: ‘Very high’ university priority areas – change 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Links or partnerships with the public, government, NGOs, or the private sector

All participating universities either have or are developing mechanisms to develop partnerships/links with external stakeholders such as NGOs, industry or businesses, which compares with 80% of corresponding universities indicating that such mechanisms were in place at their universities in 2012. This corresponds to

an overall increase in the importance awarded to the needs and interests of external stakeholders.

“We have increased the Human Resource capacity in the Directorate Research Development since reporting in 2014 with an additional 4 staff members and two internships. The aim of this expansion is not only to offer a more comprehensive suite of services to researchers within the Institution but also to ensure greater visibility impact and uptake of research is achieved.” – 2016

Survey response

At the institutional level, respondents reported a range of mechanisms and incentives to support the development of links/partnerships with external stakeholders. Over half of universities note that they have structures (offices/units/centres)

aimed at supporting external stakeholder engagement and collaboration such as:

- including centres/clinics aimed at interaction with the private sector, the government and communities
- public private partnerships
- legal clinics for the public

- community centres, and
- offices to support technology and knowledge transfer and international collaborations

The activities of these structures include supporting the negotiation of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and partnership agreements, and the introduction of new policies (for research incentives, partnerships, and so on) to guide relationships with government, with the public and private sectors, and with communities who may benefit from university research.

There has also been an increase in respondents noting that their universities have incentives for (academic) staff and departments to encourage the development of partnerships with the public, NGOs and the private sector. Of those who responded to the 2012 survey, just over half (55%) said their university had such incentives, whereas the corresponding figure in 2016 is 95%. The latter includes those who indicated that their university is currently developing incentives, both for departments and for individual academic staff.

Respondents to the 2016 survey listed a range of incentives for developing links with external stakeholders; for academic staff, these include non-financial and financial incentives such as incorporating research activity, research output and community engagement into formal promotion assessments and linking the approval of internal applications for research funding to a consideration of external stakeholders needs and demands.

Among financial incentives, respondents noted that their universities have policies for profit-sharing when engaging in externally funded research and monetary compensation for repurposing research findings. At the same time academics are expected and rewarded for engaging in partnerships with industry and business and attracting funding through competitive grants for research and continue to be assessed on their research output, such as publication in peer reviewed journals and presenting conference papers.

Conference discussion

The research strategy theme was explored through a day of discussions in its own dedicated session, as well as through case studies from universities in the Research Uptake Management Working Group (RUMWG), which included Vincent Ankamah-Lomotey from Kwame Nkrumah University of Technology, Rosemary Omwandho from the University of Nairobi and Mogodisheng Sekhwela from the University of Botswana; all aiming to provide universities' senior management with a clear message on their role in ensuring the sustainability of research uptake strategies and their operationalisation through appropriate structures and processes.

From the discussions and presentations on successful strategies for research uptake, an agreement emerged that it needs to be university-wide, aligned to universities overall research agenda and plan, with a particular emphasis on the role of research uptake in the whole research cycle. This is linked to a strong sense that universities should have a **balanced approach to research**, in which both basic and applied research feature, and where investment in and allocation of resources to research uptake and engagement with external stakeholders is part of a prioritisation that considers existing resources. It was felt that such an approach will support research uptake by providing strategic direction that will in turn support the overall research agenda and enhance the implementation of research uptake strategies.

It was further noted that a case should be made for prioritising research uptake, as it improves the image of the university and may foster further external investment in research in a positive feedback loop. Many universities noted that they have already been able to get support for research uptake activities from university management by demonstrating results of existing successes of research uptake and engagement. The importance of getting both **senior management and university community buy-in** for such an integrated

approach to research uptake was greatly emphasised, and it was noted by several universities that involving Vice-Chancellors, Deputy-Vice Chancellors, Departmental Heads and researchers in the process of developing strategies (e.g. through continuous consultations and sensitisation workshops) has been instrumental in gaining their support.

The role of the Vice-Chancellor in championing the importance of research uptake – both internally and externally – was also highlighted. Internally, this includes getting support for strategy documents from universities' governing bodies, as this will unlock budgets to put in place durable structures for research uptake, including offices, staff, systems, training and activities – all vital to the successful operationalisation of strategies for research uptake, as well as driving research uptake policy forward into university meetings. Equally important is the role of championing research to externally, which includes having a good knowledge of existing research successes and incorporating examples of these in interactions with external stakeholders, including in Vice-Chancellor's speeches and other public engagements. It was finally noted – in light of concerns over senior management staff turnover – that succession planning is essential to the sustainability of strategies and associated structures and processes.

3. Research uptake processes

This section of the survey looks at the processes by which universities communicate and prepare research results to ensure that they can be readily understood by external stakeholders. Below, we examine how universities assess these communication activities and determine their impact, as well as the provision of training or support for research active staff and PhD students in identifying stakeholder needs and demands and ensure these are included in the planning of research projects.

Determining the impact of research

The 2014 and 2016 surveys asked participants a number of questions to find out if their universities have mechanisms to assess the wider impact of their research, as well as to assess the effectiveness of such mechanisms.

More than half of respondents (54%) indicated that their university has mechanisms to assess the impact of their research. The number of universities reporting that they evaluate their own dissemination mechanisms to determine their effectiveness perhaps unsurprisingly matches the number of those who indicated that they have such mechanisms. In the 2012 survey, these two questions – the first enquiring about formalised ways of assessing the wider impact of research and the other enquiring about the *effectiveness* of these ways – were conflated and slightly differently worded¹; therefore comparisons will not be exact.

Nevertheless, there appears to have been an increase in the number of universities noting that they have mechanisms to assess the impact of their research – up from 20% of respondents in 2012 to 54% in 2016. These results line up well with further findings from the 2016 survey, which indicate an increase in universities noting that they have mechanisms to obtain feedback from potential users regarding the usefulness of their university's research and the extent to which users benefit from it.

Many respondents, however, noted that mechanisms to assess the impact of their research and their effectiveness are not yet in place or are very weak at their universities. At the same time universities highlight current means used to improve monitoring of research output, including annual research reporting, individual academic and departmental performance assessments, recording of research uptake activities and the development of (community) engagement strategies.

“We have revamped the University webpage, we have acquired programmes from Thomson Reuters, we have increased our open-access strategy at the Institution and formulated a policy governing open-access so that University Research is more readily accessible.” – 2016 Survey response

Some respondents also noted that they are making efforts to improve their monitoring of research impact – by incorporating impact assessment in their research policies, participating in benchmarking and carrying out more detailed analysis of online activity in relation to their universities' research output for example. A few universities also noted that they monitor and assess the impact of research through the measurement of research output – the number of publications, articles and citations, as well as information on grants and

¹ Survey question in 2012: Are there any monitoring and evaluation procedures in place at your university to assess the external impact of dissemination and communication of research results and research uptake? Survey questions in 2014: Are there any mechanisms in place at your university to assess the wider impact of university research? Are there any mechanisms in place at your university to assess the effectiveness of mechanisms to disseminate and communicate research results? (i.e. assessing the effectiveness of radio and TV, external newsletters, the university website, and other means of dissemination).

contracts, for example. In this regard, it is interesting to note that one university's response indicates that this type of assessment is not considered sufficient to gauge the impact of university research, whereas other responses list these among the impacts of research measures.

Identifying external stakeholder needs

A majority of respondents (77%) indicated that their university provides training or resources to their research active academic staff in order to help them identify the needs of external stakeholders and plan their research accordingly. This is considerably more than in 2012, when 47% of those responding to the question said that their university offered such support. In addition, we asked universities if such support is provided for PhD students, and 14 out of the 22 participating universities responded positively.

"We run a postgraduate course for students to teach them how to write proposals and other research activities. E.g. teach them how to interview community members; how to apply ethics - report findings of research to people you collected data from." – 2016 Survey response

Conference discussion

Delegates at the Benchmarking Conference were also given the opportunity to attend a breakout session that focussed specifically on university processes for research uptake, as well as hear examples of successful processes and activities that have aided partner universities in implementing research uptake strategies.

As most universities have now had their strategies approved, discussions focused on the translation of strategies into plans for implementation, which many universities have started doing through their individual Action Plans. An initial step has been the development of associated and integrated policies, such as IP, Open Access and Engagement policies and it was stressed that these need to be easily accessible to researchers. One university noted that to support this, they have put in place a clear Communication Strategy for the implementation of the overall strategy and associated policies across the university, whereas other universities noted that such implementation plans have gained support across the university through sensitisation workshops among both administrative staff and researchers to ensure that there is a common language for research uptake and engagement. These activities have all been made possible by the creation of offices and positions with responsibility for research uptake; emphasising the importance of designated and recurrent budgets in order to ensure the durability of structures. The importance of having specific roles (with associated job descriptions) with responsibility for research uptake and science communication was also highlighted, both in terms of actual communication as well as in supporting researchers, whether these roles are located in a central office or across a number of units, including the research, public relations office or in departments and faculties (or a combination of these). There was a strong sense among delegates that all staff – professional and academics – should be involved in communicating research, and the notion of the **"researcher as communicator"** was strongly advocated, with the proviso that they get adequate support from staff trained in science communication.

In addition to support from a coordinating office, it was further noted that researchers need training in identifying the needs of stakeholders in developing their research proposals, as well as the most suitable level and methods of engagement needed, such as consultations, interview techniques, participatory research methods, and Living Lab models, among others. This is already provided at a number of universities through short courses provided by research offices and faculties, however it was also suggested that this type of training should be introduced at the postgraduate level, by including it in the curriculum and by negotiating placements for students within relevant industries or communities – which in turn could lead to further engagement and investment. In this regard, it was also stressed that training is essential in order to foster a shared language and values of engagement in order to promote improved understanding and collaboration with external stakeholders.

Delegates highlighted the importance of maintaining adequate records of existing researchers and their profiles, research uptake activities and stakeholder engagement (such as research grants, partnerships, collaborations and projects) in order to manage current resources and mitigate risk in universities' relationships with external stakeholders and to foster cross-institutional collaboration by enabling research administrators to identify possible areas of multi-disciplinary research projects. Further, these records can demonstrate the existing value of research uptake and engagement activities to the university in terms of raising its profile and potentially results in further engagement and investment in university research.

Adequate records of research and engagement activity also enables universities to showcase their researchers, getting them more enthusiastic about making their research available to external stakeholders. A number of universities have also introduced additional incentives for staff to engage in research uptake activities and engagement by linking these to promotions and access to internal research funding, and it was emphasised that these changes to university processes have been an important step towards involving more researchers in externally facing and engaged research activities. Finally, it was noted that the sustainability of research uptake and engagement needs to be properly monitored and evaluated in order to ensure that outputs and outcomes are met, and that the next step for universities is to develop suitable and measurable indicators to support this.

“Before the inception of the DRUSSA programme the Research office had very little information on the extent of impact and research uptake. This has also resulted in a number of policies aimed at improving the impact and research uptake. Therefore it can be stated that the way research has been funded has changed due to the DRUSSA programme at the University of Free State” – 2016
Survey response

4. Stakeholder engagement

This section aims to determine the procedures used in engaging external stakeholders by gauging how participating universities work with key decision-makers and users of research findings to drive research results into policy and practice. The results in this section focus on data from 2014 and 2016, as questions in this section were not included in the 2012 survey. Therefore, direct comparisons cannot be made, however, where appropriate, links with findings from the 2012 survey have been considered.

University-stakeholder relationships

Participating universities were asked to provide details of their relationship with external stakeholders in terms of which stakeholder relationships they **prioritise**, how **strong** they consider their relationships with the respective stakeholders to be, and the perceived **influence** of stakeholders in effecting societal change.

As shown in **Table 1**, the stakeholders most frequently indicated as a very high priority were government ministries, departments and councils, research funders/donors and industry. These stakeholders were also associated with a perceived high level of influence on societal change and strong relationships with universities; these findings are similar to 2014, except for a slight decrease in the perceived strength of relationships with enterprise and industry.

Table 1: University-stakeholder engagement – 2016

UNIVERSITY-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: MODE AVERAGES OF PRIORITY RELATIONSHIPS, STRENGTH OF RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCE OF AGENTS			
	PRIORITY	STRENGTH	INFLUENCE
Government, ministries, departments and councils	10	10	10
Research funders and donors	10	9	9
Enterprise and industry	10	6	8
Media agents	10	6	5
Teachers and educators	9	8	8
Farmers and agriculturalists	9	7	8
Health and medical professionals	8	9	8
Publishers	8	7	7
NGOs, INGOs, and international associations	8	7	5
Other universities (domestically and internationally)	7	7	7
Informal sector	7	4	4
Environmental groups and agencies	6	8	6

Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22). Mode averages are the ratings (using a scale of 1-10) most frequently reported, 1 being the least important and 10 the most important.

Farmers and agriculturalists and health and medical professionals also remain highly prioritised stakeholders by participating universities, however it is worth noting that the level of priority for health and medical

professionals dropped between 2014 and 2016 (from 10 to 8) at the same time as universities thought that their relationships with these stakeholders were stronger as compared with 2014. Respondents also frequently identified this stakeholder group as main beneficiaries of research, indicating that this is indeed a target audience for universities' research.

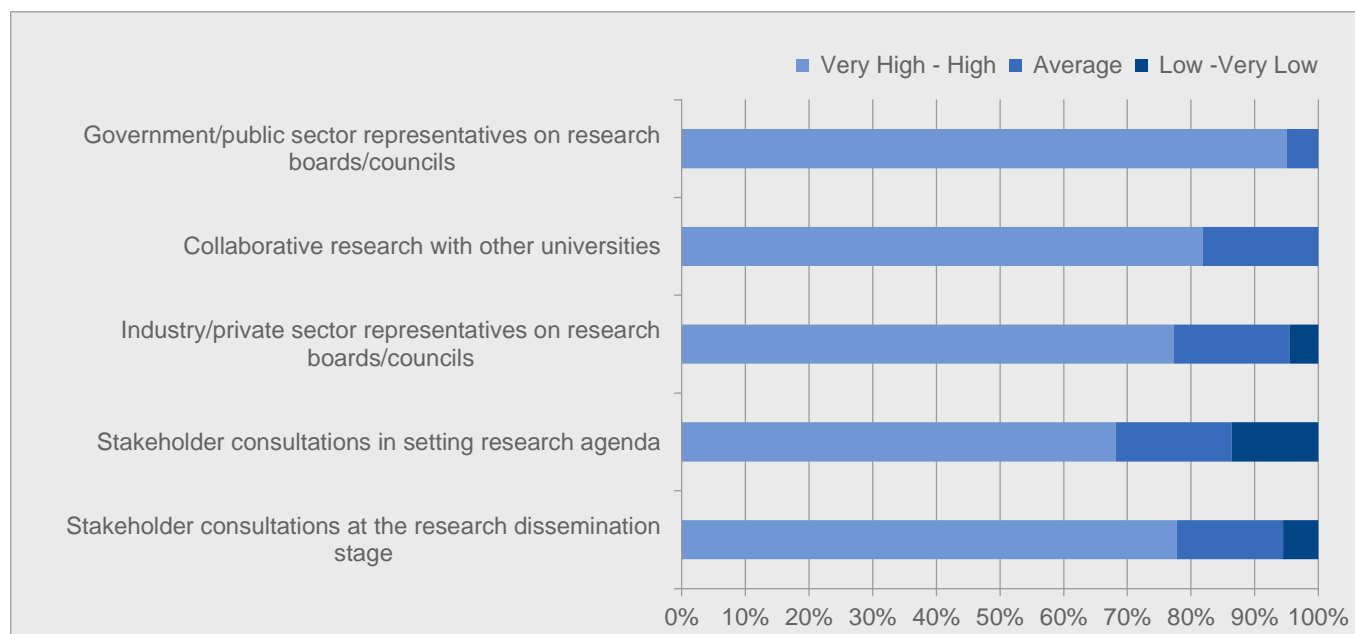
It is also worth noting that media agents are more highly prioritised in 2016 compared with 2014, whilst the strength of relationships and perceived influence of this stakeholder group remains mid-range. This could indicate that an increased awareness of the possibility of using media agents to disseminate research has not yet been matched by the development of relationships, which in turn may affect the perceived prospects of their level of influence in effecting change.

"The private sector and enterprise have benefited from value chain linkages through the establishment of food technology and business incubation centres developed by the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences." – 2016 Survey response

Priority mechanisms to engage external stakeholders

Respondents were also asked to tell us which mechanisms they favour in engaging key external stakeholders in university research. The survey found that universities give the highest priority to including public and private sector representatives (such as government and industry) on university research boards or councils, and to collaborative research projects with other universities.

Figure 19: Top five mechanisms to engage external stakeholders – 2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

The most favoured mechanisms to involve stakeholders and beneficiaries in research also line up with the top prioritised external stakeholders (see **Figure 19**), with the exception of collaboration with other universities. This group received a lower priority level compared with 2014 (from 8 to 7) but remains one of the most preferred ways of engaging with external stakeholders. Combined with universities' preference to use

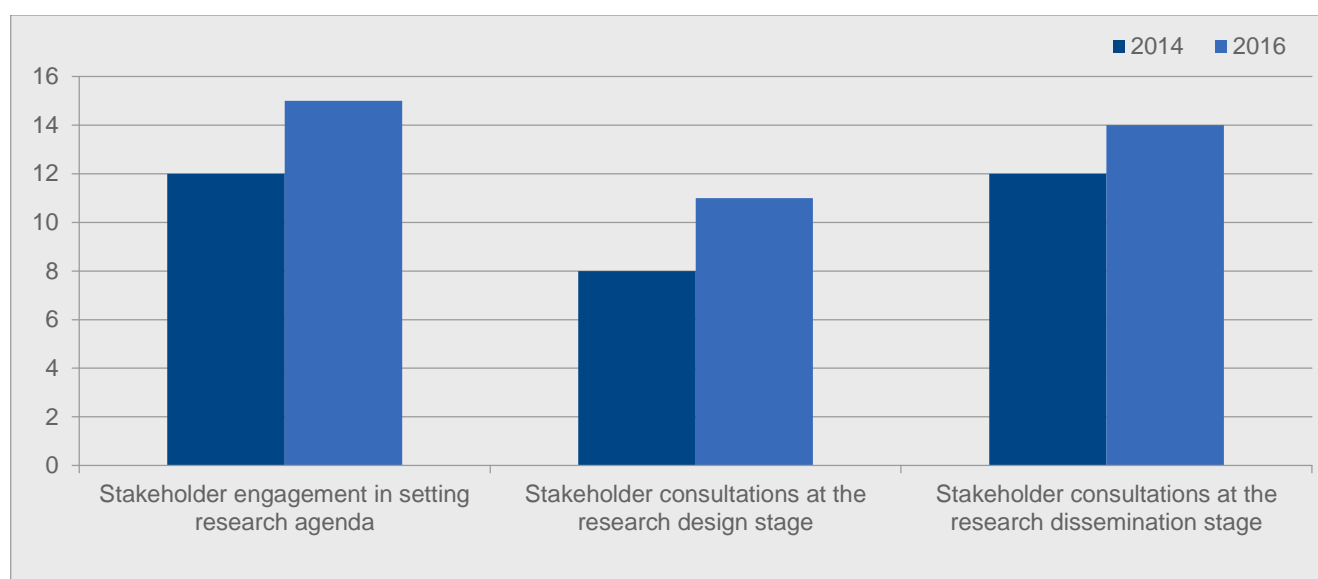
conference papers/presentations as a communication channel (see below), it appears that more traditional modes of disseminating research findings remain widespread in participating universities.

“The Directorate of Research and Graduate Training (DRGT) has conducted a series of trainings for academic staff in writing policy briefs. This was done in collaboration with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.” – 2016 Survey response

Collaboration with non-HE actors and community-university participatory research also remain a highly favoured means of involving external stakeholders in university research and over half of respondents also provided examples of informal and formal partnerships with government ministries (including commissioned work), industry and community organisations. For example, at one

university, its Institute of Interdisciplinary Research has entered into close partnership with the National Agricultural Organization (NARO) to undertake quality training and research in agricultural related work. At the same time staff from NARO are being encouraged to partner with staff at the university so that findings can be easily adopted by the organisation and eventually translated for use and adoption by farmers.

Figure 20: Engaging stakeholders in the research cycle – 2014-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 22); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Interestingly, results also show that over half of respondents (68% and 64% respectively) give 'high' or 'very high' priority to involving external stakeholders at the agenda setting and dissemination stages of the research process, evidenced by examples of including government or industry representatives on research boards or academics participating in government and advisory boards and committees. In addition, it can be noted from the examples provided that government ministries and councils often are involved in the dissemination stages of research in implementing new policies. Nevertheless, a lower proportion (50%) give the same priority rating when it comes to involving stakeholders at the design stages of research projects. This can be linked to responses in 2012 (although the exact question was not asked in that year's survey), in which many of those

“The establishment of the Government social security fund for the elderly was triggered by a study on the plight of the elderly carried out by the University.” – 2016 Survey response

participating indicated that the involvement of external stakeholders or beneficiaries in the planning/design of research was related to funding agency requirements or included in research contracts. At the same time, half of respondents noted that their university is engaged in co-creative research projects which would indicate the involvement of external stakeholders throughout the research cycle.

Recording stakeholder engagement activities

A majority of respondents noted that their university does not record or keep centralised records of research dissemination activities. However, a majority also noted that their university does keep some form of record of their research activities, either through institutional repositories (where research output is tracked) or through

“[One of our studies] provided an insight into care arrangements for the orphan and vulnerable children in [the country]. The results of the study have been adopted by the Department of Social Welfare. It has been used to establish Child Protection Panels.” – 2016 Survey response

annual reports, summarising research activities. Some universities also noted that their university keeps records of research activities at the departmental level, for example in the university library, the research office or individual departments or faculties. None of these, however, relate specifically to recording of dissemination activities, but to research activities in general, and this may or may not include dissemination. It is also interesting to note that a majority of universities have not recorded substantial change in recording of research dissemination activities since the benchmarking survey in 2012.

Conference discussion

Delegates at the stakeholder engagement thematic session focussed on practical activities that support long-lasting engagement with stakeholders with an interest in university research, whether these are internal or external. Delegates focussed in part on existing examples as well as future goals for structures and activities that would support continuous and fruitful engagement.

One of the main observations that came out of group discussions was the importance of stakeholder mapping in order to ascertain who stakeholders are, what their values and needs are and how to effectively engage with them. It was agreed that the level of engagement requires careful consideration, which in part is guided by the type of research being carried out, for example, whether it is a consultation, collaboration or a formal partnership. It was also noted that stakeholder mapping needs to take place at the strategic, institutional and project levels, all of which need to be placed within the national and university context and mandates. The group also emphasised the need and value of identifying and maintaining links with researchers – both within and outside the university, both to foster multi-disciplinary research suitable for uptake and in order for the university to properly manage its research and stakeholder engagement and partnerships. These activities should be guided by clear institutional strategies and policies on engagement.

The conference also heard from Shaun Pather, on the experience of stakeholder engagement at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), including specific examples of how this has been taken forward at the university. In outlining the development towards improved research uptake and engagement at the university, he noted the importance of aligning plans and activities to national and institutional goals and

actively demonstrating that increased visibility of the application of research both aids the university in operationalising its plans and increases the traffic to both formal outputs and the researcher. This, in turn, enhances the image and brand of the university, which serves to help attract more funding and resources to carry out further research, all of which simultaneously brings benefits to users of research. Thus, investment in research uptake is seen as a matter of positioning the institution within a competitive market and is an appropriate way to secure more external funding for research.

To support their current (and future) engagement, the university has developed a number of mechanisms, including embedding research uptake in an integrated Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) strategy (aligned with the institutional plan), providing training and exercises to identify stakeholders and developing skills for appropriate engagement and including research uptake in promotions, rewards and in internal project funding criteria.

The university has also introduced a more balanced communications strategy, which in the short-medium term is focussed on the researcher and institutional level, by actively collaborating with the departments of Mass media and Journalism. However, the university has also recently started publishing their research on the Conversation Africa platform, with very positive results on both the coverage and uptake of research as well as enthusiasm among researchers to publish in non-traditional media. The latter has also been encouraged by showcasing university research at externally facing events for university research and innovation. Prof Pather further pointed out that the university has greatly benefited from cooperation with local and provincial government through the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC), where partnerships are fostered through agreement on common themes for collaboration and by tying project funding to a requirement for government partners, thus increasing the probability of research uptake. It was also noted that CHEC has acted as a catalyst for identifying local needs and fostering cross-institutional collaboration and that the university has been able to feed into these regional needs, relating to issues ranging from traffic to waste management.

Finally, the importance of managing stakeholder information and monitoring the impact of engagement activities were highlighted (and were partially informed by) DRUSSA Good Practice Statements. It was suggested that the university should develop an information management system for strategic partnership as well as accompanying indicators to measure the impact of activities. Work on both the structure for such a system and indicators have already begun, informed in part by the European U-Multi rank tool. It was also noted, though, that these methodologies and systems for M&E need to be combined with positive and continuous personal relationships with professional peers, as well as project-related and “business-orientated” relationships.

5. Disseminating and Communicating Research

This section aims to determine participating universities' processes for communicating and publicising research findings by looking at the ways in which universities publicise research results in order to raise the profile of their institution. We particularly examine how universities approach the wider public to make research findings known as opposed to particular approaches to specific stakeholders (as in Section 4).

Coordinating university publicity

All respondents indicated that their universities have central offices that are responsible for collating and distributing publicity material on behalf of the university. At the beginning of the programme, this was typically the public relations, marketing and communications or the ICT office (72% in 2012), often working with departments, faculties and research centres in order to collect the relevant information. As the programme has

“The [University] has embraced open access to enhance the dissemination of research findings. To support this, an Open Access policy has been developed and implemented, and as a result research findings are placed on the institutional repository, including full text Theses.” – 2016 Survey response

progressed, we have seen a greater differentiation in responsibility for research communication; whilst public relations and marketing offices are responsible for such communication in a majority of universities, six universities report that their research offices has the main responsibility. In addition, almost a third of universities told us that responsibility for publicising research results is shared between the public relations and research offices, which compares to 2012, when none of the universities listed the research office in relation to communicating research

publicity on behalf of the university. Universities also note that research and/or publications offices, libraries, or particular departments or centres separately communicate the research results emanating from their individual units to specific audiences. However, these often work with the public relations and ICT offices in order to distribute publicity more widely.

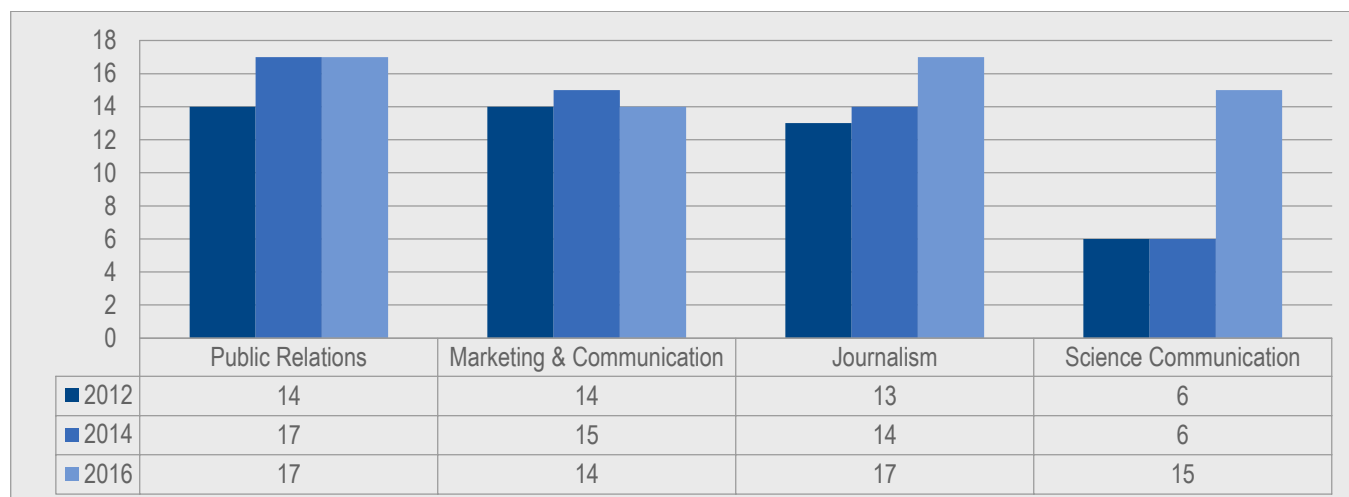
Qualifications or experience in research uptake related areas

Public relations or marketing and communications offices responsible for coordinating university publicity are not exclusively concerned with research communication, however, the findings above (and also noted in Section 2) appear to indicate greater collaboration between research offices and offices that are responsible for overall university publicity. The broadening of responsibility for publicising research results coincide with a substantial increase in staff with qualifications or experience of science communication – 15 universities in 2016 compared with six universities in 2012 – primarily gained through short courses (see **Figure 21** below). Whilst respondents did not indicate in which offices these staff are located, the finding also coincides with the provision of short courses and MPhils in science communication through the DRUSSA programme, and some universities have particularly noted these in their responses.

A large majority of staff in offices responsible for university publicity are also reported to have qualifications in PR-related subjects (85%) and journalism (also 85%), which is an increase of three and four universities respectively since 2012. Over half of universities also indicated that staff in these offices have degrees related to marketing and communication, a level that has been maintained since the beginning of the programme.

Qualifications range from diploma and professional qualification to PhD level; for PR-related subjects a majority are educated to masters' level whilst qualifications in journalism and marketing and communications are spread across first degree and PhD level, with most holding a first degree.

Figure 21: Qualifications/experience in research uptake related areas – 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 17); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 18); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 20)

Communicating research results

Communication and marketing strategies

All but one university said that their institution either has or is currently developing a communication strategy. The findings of the survey show that since 2012, five universities have started developing these strategies. On the other hand, only 38% of universities have marketing strategies, with a further four universities currently developing these strategies. However, in the 2014 and 2016 surveys, respondents were asked to report on communication and marketing strategies separately, whereas in 2012 these two were conflated into one question. Therefore, the above comparison with 2012 should be viewed with some caution.

Announcing new research

The most cited channels through which to announce new research projects externally were external media (including print, TV, radio, and social media), the university website, conference presentations/papers and newsletters and journal articles. Many universities also noted the use of public-facing events, including trade fairs, public lectures, stakeholder meetings, and demonstrations of research within communities that may benefit from the research. To communicate information on new research internally, a majority of universities use newsletters and the university website, followed by internal email distributions lists and through internal reporting structures.

From the responses, we can note a greater differentiation between external and internal modes of communication compared with 2012 in particular, when universities to a higher degree indicated similar channels to reach their external and internal audiences. For example, there has been an increase in the use of internal emailing and reporting structures when announcing new research internally, such as reporting to senior university management, proceedings and reports from research board/committee and faculty and

school meetings – used by around half of responding universities in 2016 compared to 30-35% in 2012 – at the same time as the use of public-facing events to make external stakeholders aware of new research has increased substantially since 2012.

The use of conferences and public-facing events also corresponds to the most favoured communication channels for research results noted in the section below (see **Figure 22** below), however, it should be noted that public lectures were not included as an option in the previous surveys (2012 and 2014), and therefore direct comparisons cannot be made.

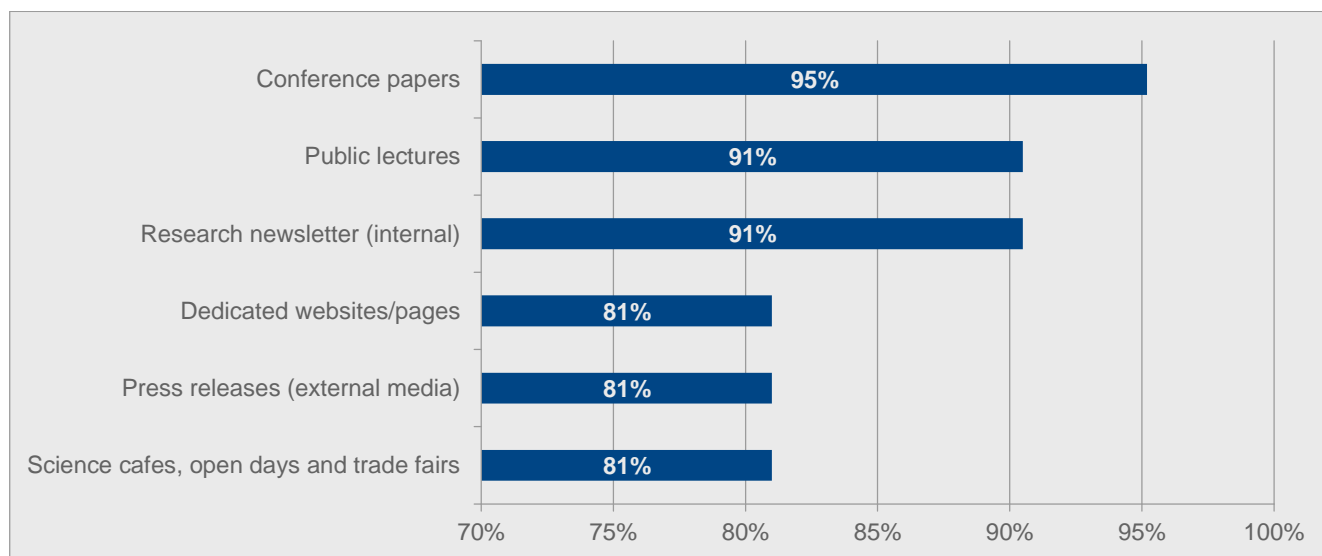
Communication channels

Respondents were asked to report on the ways in which they communicate and publicise research results. **Figure 22** shows that the most commonly used communication channels for research results in 2016 are conference papers, public lectures and internal research newsletters, as well as the university website. Of these, the latter has increased substantially since the beginning of the programme – used by 18 universities in 2016, compared with six in 2012 – evidenced by the development of webpages dedicated to communicating research findings on universities' main websites (see **Figure 23** below).

The use of conference papers is an interesting finding since these would typically be directed to academics at other institutions, rather than beneficiaries of research. These channels may also be less accessible to the wider public, both in practical and language terms. This finding, however, lines up with universities' preference to collaborate with other universities (noted in Section C above), where relations with other universities is fairly highly rated (both in terms of priority and strength of relationship), as well as highly prioritised as a mechanism to engage external stakeholders in university research.

“A journalist specialising in Research and Uptake has been appointed to write articles on research findings. [We have] improved our website to continuously expose interest in research, and [there is a] greater use of social media and more frequent publication in the press targeting research excellence at the University.” –
2016 Survey response

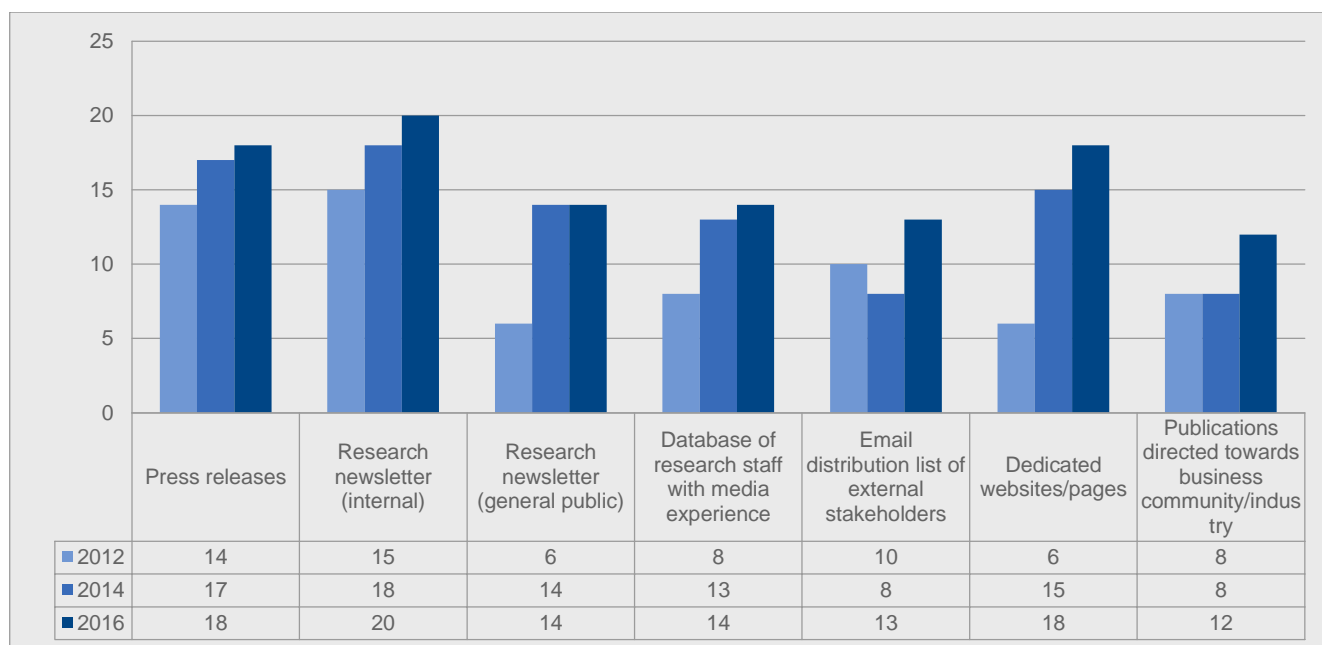
Figure 22: Most used research communication channels – 2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

At the same time, we can also see that public-facing events, such as science cafes and open days are commonly used and there has also been an increase in the use of external newsletters aimed at the general public, used by 14 universities in 2016, compared to six in 2012.

Figure 23: Communication channels used by universities – 2012-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2012 (sample: 20) DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 22); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Conference discussion

Delegates were also given the opportunity to explore in depth how to disseminate and communicate the results of university research in a separate breakout session, as well as hear from Felicitas Moyo on how communication of research has developed at the University of Zambia, including challenges, practical examples of current activities to support research communication, as well as goals for the future.

From the breakout session, an agreement emerged that a number of steps are necessary in order to ensure effective and lasting communication of research, stemming from the university's original obligation to communicate its research to its stakeholders and beneficiaries, including partners, government, industry and communities. First, it was stressed that **research communication needs to be both properly defined** – in order to generate a common understanding across the university of what it entails – as well as contextualised within the research uptake environment. This includes explaining what research uptake is, for example, problem-solving research for the community that lends itself well to uptake, but also crucially what it is not. It was also noted that senior management support, including financial support for research communication, can be gained by leveraging existing successes, such as examples of research that have been successfully communicated to intended beneficiaries.

Secondly, it was agreed that successful research communication needs a **functional and coordinating unit** that is adequately financed and staffed with personnel with the right skills, the latter provided with the necessary training. In regards to skills, the group also stressed the importance of leveraging the existing body of scholarship into research uptake itself. Whether a centralised or decentralised model is chosen, the benefits of having a coordinating function for communication, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to support researchers and departments, were also noted.

Thirdly, effective communication needs to be backed by a **Communication Strategy** that is linked to other university policies, aligned to the institutional plan and accompanied by clear guidelines for its university-wide implementation. To ensure the sustainability of communication, the group agreed that maintaining skills and a drive for communication can be attained through using available resources, which can include DRUSSA online resources, as well as through mainstreaming monitoring and evaluation of communication to the university's processes for M&E, including individual performance indicators and KPIs.

Felicitas Moyo, PhD candidate at the University of Zambia, also spoke to this session, outlining both the internal and external challenges to research communication, and the efforts of the university to address these issues. Many of the internal issues stem from a lack of prioritisation of research and research uptake at the institutional level, exacerbated by high turn-over within senior management, and limited funding and structures (offices and staff) for research. This has resulted in limited deliberate engagement between researchers and communities, minimal linkage between the university and industry and a reliance on publication in peer-reviewed journals, as the latter is linked to career progression for researchers. However, a number of current (and planned) activities have begun to address these issues and were noted to have favourably impacted on researcher and PR staff engagement in research communication. These include the introduction of multi-disciplinary journals under the auspices of the Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies and training and seminars for new postgraduate students in how to communicate research; with the university requiring students to submit abstracts for the dissemination of research to targeted stakeholders as well as publishing at least one paper *before* graduation. The university has also made efforts to engage external media houses, noting the initial reluctance of both the university's PR office and journalist – who lack both training and interest in science communication – by holding media briefings and conducting interviews with researchers that have appeared on both the university radio and on national television, highlighting in particular the success of the use of radio in motivating researchers to get involved in science communication.

The university also has a number of plans to further improve research communication, including establishing a dedicated research uptake office with a trained manager, conducting science communication workshops for researchers and students as well as introducing research uptake and science communication in the postgraduate curriculum. Further, there are plans to link research uptake to university research funding and establishing it as a promotion criteria. Finally, there is a desire to provide training to PR staff in science communication, followed by more media briefings in order both to avoid misrepresentation of research findings and to build a better relationship with external media for the sustainability of science communication.

6. DRUSSA programme influence and sustainability

This section provides an overview of the changes and successes achieved by participating universities over the course of the programme and explores the degree to which DRUSSA is seen to have influenced change and/or attitudes towards research uptake management. In preparation for the last all-university Leaders and Champions' event of the DRUSSA programme, the third and final benchmarking survey also included questions relating to the specific initiatives and activities of the DRUSSA programme and how the most useful of these could sustainably be carried forward by participating universities. This includes looking at the remaining challenges to progress and what would be needed to guarantee a sustained institutional support for research uptake, with the aim of supporting discussions and strategies to ensure the sustainability of the programme once it has been completed. This includes the opportunity for Leaders and Champions to distil approaches to ensure continued support from the respective university leadership.

Changes and successes

Research uptake strategy

DRUSSA partner universities have demonstrated a considerable strengthening of their strategic approach to research uptake, and have made strides towards greater institutionalisation of research uptake structures over the past five years. This is evident in universities' examples of change – either to strategy documents to include research uptake – or in the way research uptake is considered at the level of university management.

Some of the main changes noted since the beginning of the programme include the large number of universities formally incorporating research uptake into their research strategies, as well as the development of practical plans to support and implement these strategies. One university, for example, has developed a Communications Strategy and an Extension and Outreach Policy, while another university has recently approved a Community Engagement Framework to support the institutional research plan. At another university, an incentive scheme to encourage academics to become more engaged in research uptake activities has been established.

“As a result of being involved in DRUSSA activities (including university workshops) we have focused attention on this critical area of research practice. Research Uptake is, at least conceptually, something which every senior manager, who has research as a KPA, understands.” – 2016 Survey response

Participating universities also perceive strong support for research uptake from university leadership, highlighting their increased prioritisation of, and active involvement in, research uptake activities. One university noted, for example, that “the DVCAA has now taken upon himself to address faculties and get even greater support for a DRUSSA approach to research uptake”.

University management support for research uptake is also evident through the development of structures and processes to support the communication of research results to external stakeholders. This includes the (re)allocation of resources for research uptake, including new offices and staff, funding for research uptake

“The visibility realised from the research uptake blog and research profiles developed for research-active staff by the university and individual research staff as evidence of the potential benefits has resulted in some research-active staff voluntarily submitting research articles to the University Relations Office to be disseminated and some taking active steps to improve their research communication skills.” – 2016 Survey response

activities and training in communicating research results. Since 2012, a number of new offices and posts have been created to support research uptake, such as the Division of Research, Innovation, and Outreach at one institution and the approval for a new Director of Research and Extension at another. Institutional commitment to developing the requisite human resources to enable strengthened uptake is also noted in respondents’ examples of training opportunities for staff to support the implementation and diffusion of research uptake and science communication skills across their universities. One university, for example, said that, “with the gained training in science communication at the University Relations Office, there is now capacity to begin developing strategies to further disseminate and communicate research findings to a diverse audience”.

Evidence of buy-in for developing uptake at the strategic level is also exemplified by changes to university funding for research to include elements of research uptake. For example, at one university, the Ethics Review Board is mandated to “look out for uptake strategies in all research projects submitted for their review”. As evidence of this at another university, one respondent reported that they “have started to monitor the distribution of funds and the productivity of research at the institution, as well as the amount of external and internal collaboration between projects. Research funding is also more focused towards impact and problem-solving than just funding research to do research”. The respondent further noted that the university has developed “a number of policies aimed at improving the impact and research uptake. Therefore it can be stated that the way research has been funded has changed due to the DRUSSA programme at the University”.

The increased recognition of and awareness of research uptake by staff across institutions, at the level of senior management in particular, has been highlighted as a significant success of the programme. Respondents note that they have been making great headway towards the institutionalisation of research uptake, supported by strategic decisions at the highest level of the university, including the development of structures and processes to support research uptake, (re)allocation of resources for research uptake (offices/staff/activities/training/funds) and active support for research uptake.

“DRUSSA training has enhanced the skills of staff who are now more effective in providing researchers with the support required. Also, those trained during the DRUSSA programme are now serving as trainers during capacity building workshops and seminars for research uptake.” – 2016 Survey response

Research uptake processes

As sustained institutional processes necessarily flow from strategic decisions, respondents were also keen to emphasise changes they have seen at the process and procedure level. As noted above, respondents highlight the importance of university management support and highlight that this has improved the implementation of new research processes and procedures. At one university, research uptake is now a standing agenda on the Senate Research Committee.

“With the inception of DRUSSA, the emphasis has shifted from publication to research uptake, hence the application form for the [internal research] fund has been revised to draw awardee attentions on the importance of research uptake.” –
2016 Survey response

Many of the examples also concern the incorporation of research uptake into research policies and accompanying plans to support the working culture of newly established research uptake offices or the embedding of research uptake management within existing offices and faculties and departments. One university has for example jointly “aligned faculty and centre activities with RTI focus areas by identifying flagship projects [...] to support the new focus and niche areas”.

In terms of improving mechanisms to assess the wider impact of research and to inform future research uptake activities, respondents also point to efforts to improve the collection of information on current research being carried out at their universities to feed into institutional repositories and databases. Whilst these are not necessarily focused on dissemination or engagement, there is a hope that these activities will support the assessment of university research impact.

We also received a range of responses regarding changes to research uptake processes which emphasised joined-up, cross-institutional approaches, and steps towards utilising a range of existing internal offices, functions, and expertise. This is evidenced by examples of training provision for researchers carried out by several offices across the university. For example, one university offers courses on the development of policy briefs, communicating to different audiences and conducting stakeholder analyses, delivered jointly by the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training and the Directorate for Journalism and Mass Communication. At another university, capacity building seminars for researchers is coordinated by the Division of Research, Innovation and Outreach, working closely with the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Research Training and Deans of Graduate Schools.

The commitment to utilising staff across the university is also shown in the creation of specific posts for communicating research, drawn from public relations and communications offices, to support research uptake management teams. One university, for example has just appointed a second communication specialist, taken from the Department of Media and another university notes that a new “media liaison” post has greatly improved the relationship between the Research & Innovation Management and Marketing and Communication Directorates which “has resulted in a more focused attention to driving dissemination of research findings at an institutional level”. This interdepartmental collaboration, and the integration of various institutional functions to achieve strengthened research uptake management, can be seen as outflows of a more deliberate and focused strategic vision towards getting research into use.

Similarly, participants view the commitment and support perceived among all levels of university staff and academics as the main success of changes to processes to support research uptake and provided a number of examples of researchers taking a research uptake approach in their research projects, for example utilising dissemination sessions with farmers to improve the increased use of underutilised vegetables and translating research findings to suit new teaching methods.

Stakeholder engagement

Measuring change in stakeholder engagement is a longer-term endeavour than measuring change to institutional processes and strategies; nevertheless, we received numerous examples from participants regarding changes to stakeholder engagement over the course of the DRUSSA programme. These often focus on the university's emphasis on engaging stakeholders more vigorously, and embedding engagement into the research cycle, although there are also examples of how stakeholders have responded and taken advantage of universities' efforts to get research into use.

There appears to be more strategic efforts directed towards engaging specific power-brokers, such as policy-makers and industry, and specific beneficiaries of research. This is evidenced by respondents providing examples of their universities allocating resources to set up new offices or strengthen established offices to oversee stakeholder engagement or establish strategic partnerships. One respondent told us of the "establishment of the Office of University-Industry partnership", whilst another told us of the "appointment of a deputy Director in the Linkages Office, who is directly tasked with the DRUSSA programme". A more concerted strategic approach towards engagement is also noted by another respondent, telling us "the university realised that it needed a different approach to its funding and adopted a more outward-looking and engaging research strategy, leveraging funding and research opportunities with industry and other partners by matching funds obtained from external sources".

Respondents also noted an increase in strategic partnerships and in the number of projects that have achieved uptake or that involve external stakeholders. For example, one respondent said that they have recently signed MOUs with four other national universities to "generate knowledge and promote research uptake for national and regional development". Another respondent told us that their office is "encouraging a team of researchers to share knowledge from their research sources used by communities using local language and collectively come up with solutions". This collaborative approach is echoed by another respondent who noted that they are now coordinating research groups with donors and funders of research in order to "make efforts to reach target beneficiaries". One result from these coordinated groups has been that "research findings from agronomy have been widely adopted by the participating farmers and many have success stories to tell".

"The University now has a Research Uptake Management Strategy which will serve to guide all RUM initiatives in the University. Even the Vice-Chancellor of the University strongly supports all Research Uptake Management initiatives in the university." – 2016 Survey response

Respondents further illustrated pan-institutional efforts towards improved engagement. For example, one reported that the initial DRUSSA representatives have been "replaced by Faculty/Departmental representatives," while another told us they are designing "measures to improve collaboration with the cooperation office on the one hand, and the research management and teaching/programmes offices on the other hand". Other respondents reported the development of internal systems to train and support systems for future engagement. One university told us that they are "setting up university technical teams to discuss training and research needs with production and technical staff in the private sectors", while another said that a task team has been developed a framework for a planned stakeholder mapping exercise.

Others alluded to how the stakeholders themselves are brought closer to this process. One respondent is looking at the creation of "more enabling platforms for direct external stakeholder-university technical staff exchanges," while another respondent told us of a partnership with a national Private Sector Foundation which has ensured that "students [...] can now get placements in various industries and companies across Uganda, which is a major outcome of our increased engagement with stakeholders as a result of DRUSSA".

Dissemination and communication of research

Compared to other sections, we had fewer responses regarding specific examples of change in approaches to the communication of research. However, we have seen change in the ways in which different units, offices and departments collaborate to communicate research more effectively to the public, usually involving offices responsible for the website, the public relations and marketing offices, and libraries. One respondent told us that “Research Communicators have been appointed to assist communicate research” and in addition that the “directorates of research and ICT have managed to set up a webpage where research findings are communicated”. Another has emphasised efforts towards knowledge translation, noting that the “synergistic relationship between research and innovation management and the marketing function [...] continues to mature and develop”. In addition to evidence of cross-unit collaboration, there have also been efforts towards internal capacity-building, improvement of skills in research communication and support for publications, for example by establishing a publication fund at one university and a research uptake fund to support incorporation of uptake in research initiatives at another.

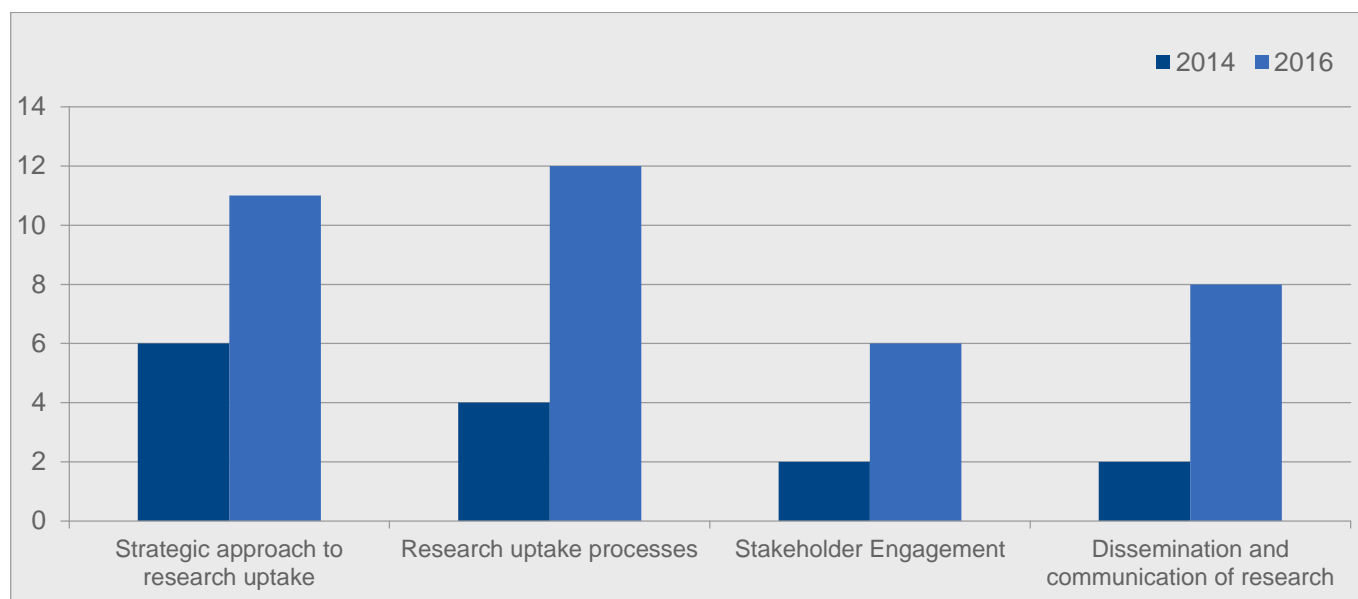
At the same time, universities are also making efforts to engage more vigorously with external stakeholders, including policy-makers, the public and beneficiaries of research. One university told us that, in 2015, they hosted a “Research and Innovations Conference under the theme of community transformation through research, innovations and knowledge translation, [which] brought together scholars, policy-makers and research users from different parts of the world to share their research findings”. This approach is also corroborated by another university where they have started a “seminar series in which researchers share their findings with the wider public” and that “some departments and research groups are organising knowledge exchange seminars, addressing real life issues like climate change”.

Several respondents also emphasised a renewed focus on the dissemination and communication of research findings through university radio, engagement with mass media, and increased social media presence, which are often supported by renewed efforts to develop and populate institutional repositories of research currently being carried out at the university. One respondent told us of a “weekly dissemination radio programme” which is “making a lot of impact”, whilst another respondent highlighted the success of engagement with The Conversation Africa. It was particularly noted that “research published on Conversation Africa has been republished by other media, giving it a wider audience. As a result of this, [...] researchers are beginning to get excited about science communication, and a few early publications have spurred others on to also communicate their research externally”.

Measuring the influence of DRUSSA on institutional change

In 2014, we introduced a new question to explore the degree to which DRUSSA is perceived to have influenced change and attitudes towards research uptake management in relation to institutional strategy, processes, stakeholder engagement and dissemination and communication of research results.

Figure 24: 'Very significant' influence on change – 2014-2016



Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2014 (sample: 21); DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Correlating with earlier findings suggesting that attitudes towards research uptake have changed most among university leaders and senior management, it is in the area of **research uptake strategy** where we see DRUSSA has had the most significant impact in influencing change. Half of respondents (50%) reported that DRUSSA has had a 'very significant' impact in this regard, with a further 41% reporting 'significant' impact – a total of 91% positive impact overall. This is a substantial increase compared with 2014, when 63% of universities reported a positive impact of the programme on development of universities' strategic approach to research uptake.

Respondents also outlined specific areas of change and the activities of the programme that have had a positive influence on these, including:

- incorporation of research uptake in policies and strategies
- resources allocated to research uptake – such as dedicated offices or personnel, which indicate institutional priority of research uptake.
- increased awareness among senior management and other staff of the importance of research uptake

To support these developments at participating universities, respondents noted activities that were believed to have contributed to the implementation of change:

- training, benchmarking and networking activities that have provided a conceptual framework / culture of research uptake that participants can use to promote research within the institution, e.g. all-university benchmarking events, university workshops (campus visits) and courses (MPhil in research uptake)

- campus visits and workshops, aiding in gathering senior management support.
- programme support and mentorship in developing and formulating policies and strategies for research uptake.

Table 2: Perceived influence of DRUSSA on change in strategic approach to research uptake – 2016

	Count	%
Very significantly	11	50%
Significantly	9	41%
Somewhat	1	5%
Not very significantly	1	5%
Grand total	22	100%

Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Table 3: Perceived influence of DRUSSA on change in research uptake processes – 2016

	Count	%
Very significantly	12	55%
Significantly	7	32%
Somewhat	3	14%
Grand total	22	100%

Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Regarding **research uptake processes**, we found that this area is perceived – jointly with research uptake strategy to be one of the areas where DRUSSA has influenced change most. Over half of respondents (55%) indicated that the programme has had a ‘very significant’ impact, with a further 32% reporting that the impact has been ‘significant’ (a total of 87% positive impact overall). This area also saw the largest increase in positive response since 2014 with 12 compared with 4 universities indicating that DRUSSA has had a ‘very significant’ impact on change.

Whilst many universities indicated that implementation of processes are slow, they also noted that the programme has contributed to some initial outcomes in terms of changed processes, including:

- inclusion of research uptake in internal allocation of research funds, such as application forms for internal research funds.
- institutionalisation of research uptake, including through sensitisation workshops among staff, which indicate positive steps towards the implementation of research uptake elements of policies /strategies.
- awareness of research uptake among university staff and faculty, including through incorporating research uptake in research project planning
- reporting on research uptake, as through annual reports

Among activities believed to have supported the implementation of change of institutional processes, the respondents noted:

- programme capacity building and training and networking activities that have improved participants' skills include all-university events (such as Benchmarking conferences), university workshops (campus visits) and courses (MPhil in research uptake)
- providing a research uptake discourse and enhanced research uptake culture

Table 4: Perceived influence of DRUSSA on change in stakeholder engagement – 2016

	Count	%
Very significantly	6	27%
Significantly	8	36%
Somewhat	7	32%
Not very significantly	1	5%
Grand total	22	100%

Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

A total of 63% of respondents reported a positive impact on **stakeholder engagement** (27% reporting 'very significant' impact, and 36% reporting 'significant' impact); while a further 5% thought the impact had been 'not very significant'. This is an improvement since 2014; however, of the four areas of the survey, it is in stakeholder engagement that respondents told us that impact may be slower to realise (or slower to become measureable) than in other areas. This is made clear by universities finding it hard to pinpoint specific elements of the programme that have contributed to change and is also the area where the least change since 2014 can be noted. Respondents do, however, note a positive shift in their universities' approach towards stakeholder engagement including the following:

- provision of a new focus on stakeholder engagement as an important feature of overall research uptake management.
- awareness of stakeholder engagement among university staff and researchers, e.g. active efforts to include stakeholder engagement in research project planning and production of materials that are suitable for external stakeholders.
- knowledge – and sometimes recording – of existing research within the university, improving possibilities of effectively engaging with stakeholders.
- cross-university collaboration

Table 5: Perceived influence of DRUSSA on change in dissemination and communication of research - 2016

	Count	%
Very significantly	8	36%
Significantly	7	32%
Somewhat	7	32%
Grand total	22	100%

Source: DRUSSA benchmarking survey 2016 (sample: 22)

Finally, regarding DRUSSA's influence on the **dissemination and communication of research**, 68% of respondents reported a positive impact of the programme (32% 'significant', and 36% 'very significant'). Despite the relatively lower positive impact noted for dissemination and communication of research (compared to the other areas), there was significant increase in respondents indicating that the programme has 'very significantly' influenced change between 2014 and 2016 with eight universities compared with only two in 2014. It is also noteworthy that none of the respondents reported that influence of DRUSSA has been 'not very significant,' as compared with 14% in 2014.

As with the other areas of research uptake, participants told us that one of the most lasting benefits of the DRUSSA programme has been its contribution to raising the awareness within universities of the importance of effective communication of research results, at the same time as highlighting that more needs to be done to translate such awareness into new models of communication. Some steps have, however been taken to embed these into institutional structures and processes, including:

- resources and support allocated to dissemination and communication of research results, e.g. new offices and/or support from various university offices and researchers.
- development of communications strategies as part of overall approach towards research uptake policy, which has been supported by campus visits and DRUSSA staff mentorship.

Respondents also highlight some of the activities that they believe have contributed to implementation of change:

- workshops and courses, e.g. training in science communication
- DRUSSA research uptake blogs
- campus visits and general DRUSSA mentorship

These differences in how respondents attribute institutional change to the DRUSSA programme are perhaps natural, given that the scope of activity covered in each of the survey's sections varies as well. Research uptake strategy and processes, for example, are areas of work that perhaps fall more fully under the exclusive remit of the universities themselves. They are therefore able to convene regular meetings of research active staff and offices engaged with research uptake; to design or amend university policy to reflect an institutional emphasis on research uptake; and to coordinate research agendas with approaches to getting research into use. Areas of work such as stakeholder engagement and wider communication, however, involve actors external to the university, and therefore ascribing change and impact can be longer-term in nature and somewhat more complex. Circumstances in which agents of government, industry, or civil society are not seen to have fully subscribed to the utility of university research, for example, can discourage respondents from assigning significant change to these spheres of work. Continued monitoring and evaluation in this area, however, may begin to reveal some important changes and impact flowing from the programme, which will be an important facet of universities' own work once the programme has completed.

Sustainability of research uptake post-DRUSSA

As the programme draws to a close, we introduced a suite of questions that relate to specific DRUSSA initiatives and activities. This is to determine which of these participants found most useful, and to explore how successful interventions could be carried forward sustainably by participating universities.

“At an organisational level, [the University] community is more appreciative of the value of research uptake and have taken deliberate steps to mainstream research uptake in individual and institutional research initiatives.” – 2016 Survey response

One of the lasting benefits of the DRUSSA programme noted throughout the survey responses is the contribution made to the institutionalisation of research uptake in participating universities. At the highest level this is manifested in senior management support which has translated into the incorporation of research uptake as a focus element of institutional strategies and policies. Moreover, an increased awareness of, and commitment to, the importance of research uptake is demonstrated by increases in the resources dedicated to research uptake

focused staff, offices and activities.

Elements / activities promoting sustainability

The most useful elements / activities of the DRUSSA programme noted by participants include:

- **Training workshops and short courses (MPhil and PhD):** A majority of respondents (65%) note that training provided as part of the programme has greatly benefited both individual staff, who have gained skills in research uptake and science communication, and institutions through the dispersion of these new skills throughout the university, e.g. incorporating training into university training programmes and supporting their university offices engaged in research uptake and science communication activities. A majority of participants also note that continuous training/capacity building is one of the activities that are most likely to support sustainability of research uptake within their institutions, either through ‘train-the-trainer’ type workshops for university staff or through continuous peer learning through networking and interaction with other universities that have taken part in the programme.
- **Campus visits / DRUSSA programme support structure:** Over half of participants indicate that institutional visits and continued support from DRUSSA partners – in particular a staff member dedicated to each university – has been instrumental in gaining support for research uptake senior management and providing a framework in which institutions have been able to develop policies and strategies as well as begin to map out implementation plans for these. To support sustainability, respondents note that access to such support, even if intermittent, would be very useful, e.g. annual meetings of the former DRUSSA universities or institutional visits.
- **Access to resources and community of universities:** Many participants note that material that has been produced through and by the programme and in the short courses, e.g. guidelines, reports, templates and DRUSSA blog case studies,

“The key thing is that DRUSSA has built upon existing understanding of the need for research to impact on society as already reflected in the various strategic documents. DRUSSA is an ‘enabler’ and building momentum rather than being a sole causative agent.” – 2016 Survey response

have been one of the most useful elements of the programme. In this regard, participants also note the benefits of access to a community of like-minded universities, e.g. through networking and peer learning at workshops and benchmarking events and that continuous access to both materials and the community would greatly support sustainability of research uptake.

Challenges to the sustainability of research uptake

Whilst participants are generally positive about the DRUSSA programme's influence and the prospects of continuing the work of institutionalising and improving research uptake within their universities, they also note some issues that may affect the sustainability of current processes and activities. These include:

- **Resources:** This includes continuous funding and budgets for offices and staff engaged in research uptake, as well as for research uptake activities.
- **Staff turn-over and continued university support:** This is a particular worry in relation to change of senior management staff, which participants fear will disrupt the process of institutionalising research uptake and slow down implementation of policies and strategies that have been developed during the course of the programme.
- **Training:** As noted above, participants are conscious that a lack of continuous improvement in research uptake and science communication skills, and the subsequent possibilities of dispersing this knowledge throughout their universities, would impede sustainability. This is often noted in relation to uncertainty over continued funding/resources allocated to research uptake staff and activities.
- **Continued stakeholder engagement:** As noted above, this is a concern among participants, in particular in relation to the difficulties in establishing lasting relationships with external stakeholders.

Research uptake strategy

While there have been some noteworthy changes in universities' approaches to the strategic management of research uptake over the DRUSSA programme, there remain challenges that participating institutions have faced along the way. Some of these challenges, as might be expected, concern the allocation of requisite resources to enhance uptake, while other challenges concern longer-term efforts to influence research culture towards an emphasis on uptake. Through the survey, we received 21 examples of challenges in the area of research uptake strategy.

For example, several institutions echoed the sentiment that 'staffing and the lack of funding, as well as the active implementation of the policy' were barriers to rapid change in uptake strategy, with another university reporting that they face 'limited resources, both financial and human'. Marshalling the necessary resources to focus on uptake also depends in large part upon the depth and breadth of attitudinal change within a university: 'Research uptake will need a lot of buy-in from faculty members, plus [the] lack of dedicated funds for carrying out intensive research uptake campaigns [is a challenge]', explained one respondent.

This is connected to broader changes in research culture, which are slow-moving and may only become more evident in time. As one respondent noted, 'changing the mind-set of researchers to incorporate the whole cycle in research planning, i.e. to focus on the end result, and to plan for research uptake,' is proving difficult. Others echoed the difficulty of institutionalising change. One told us that 'communicating research from the different units is still difficult', while another affirmed that they 'still are not able to capture the full extent of our research impact and uptake'.

Research uptake processes

Challenges in facilitating strategic change can also exacerbate challenges in implementing policy and processes. 20 universities replied with examples of challenges to effecting change in research uptake processes.

One university reported that ‘staff complain that [a] shortage of funds often results in cutting down the budget for dissemination of research results, which is discouraging them from adopting RU strategies’, drawing the link between strategy and process quite explicitly. Another noted: “There is no designated member of staff that is charged with the responsibility of research uptake monitoring and management”, alluding again to issues around resource allocation.

Several respondents focused instead on the challenges faced by individual researchers and research teams. These challenges ranged from those of time management to those of influencing change in research culture. One respondent reported that there was “inadequate motivation on the part of the researchers, inadequate time [and] insufficient research funding to cater for these activities”. Another stated, “elements to demonstrate and promote research tend to be expensive and cannot be utilised as often as we would like” and “not all share a vision that research should be relevant or of value”.

“We should examine how universities can co-fund some aspects on continued capacity development. In this regard capacity development in terms of skills for researchers themselves is critical.” –
2016 Survey response

One university provided a detailed response to this particular challenge: “Challenges relate to implementation at the level of active researchers. Plans and ideas have been formed, but we have not implemented, for example, further workshops, other than those convened by DRUSSA. The overall time spent on managing this institutionally is a challenge, given that it competes with other strategic priorities. Resources may be required for a dedicated research uptake manager. We have to spend more time at lower levels e.g. ensuring that research uptake becomes a standing item at faculty level meetings. Perhaps the biggest hurdle is the changing of mind-sets”.

Stakeholder engagement

Some of the challenges faced in achieving sustained stakeholder engagement flow from challenges relating to strategy and process. However, some challenges arise in environments external to the university as well. In all, 18 respondents to the survey cited examples of the difficulties faced in generating stakeholder engagement with research outputs.

Related to the challenge of achieving a more uniform institutional drive towards research uptake, one respondent told us that they “are still developing this entrepreneurial culture of engagement which means that there are still a number of units and departments that do not [see] engagement at a desirable level with external stakeholders”. Another told us that while awareness of the need for stakeholder engagement has been achieved, there is a lack of “policies to guide the implementation”. Another reiterated that “only awareness has been increased. There is a need to implement the stakeholder engagement as well”.

Even in cases where universities are actively focusing on new approaches to such engagement, there remain challenges to achieving buy-in from external end users. One respondent noted that “political changes at [government] level tend to affect relationships with stakeholders – we have no control over this”. Another noted, “new stakeholders have very distinct requirements which sometimes clash with our policies and

procedures”, and some stakeholders, unfamiliar with universities constraints, impose “very demanding reporting deadlines” that staff are unable to meet.

Dissemination and communication of research

Efforts to generate strengthened models of communication have faced hurdles, but respondents provided fewer examples of challenges in this section than in any of the other three areas. 15 respondents reported examples of challenges in effecting change in the communication of research.

A common theme that emerges concerns challenges in joining up the relevant offices and units to ensure that research is comprehensively communicated from all departments, and in a consistent way. One respondent told us that “the public engagement systems are under the control of another directorate, which is also responsible for protocol for visitors to the university. It is difficult to engage them in other activities”. Another respondent echoed this, telling us that “due to decentralisation, obtaining information on research from the departments is a major challenge”.

There are two separate challenges alluded to here – the challenge of joining up units with a responsibility (or potential responsibility) for communication (including PR offices, research management office, libraries, and others), and the challenge of collating research activities from all university faculties and departments in an equal manner. Research cultures as regards uptake can vary between academic disciplines, which complicate the difficulty in coordinating the communication of research results.

One respondent told us that they have “no expertise in science communication”, suggesting that knowledge translation itself is a principal challenge that they face. As concerns the next generation of researchers, another respondent told us that “mechanisms to involve students in engagement activities [are] not fully developed”. This is a critical point, as it will be new academics coming into the system and who will arrive with, it might be argued, relative openness as to what the full research cycle ought to involve (research uptake included).

7. Research uptake Action Plans

DRUSSA partner universities have overseen a significant degree of change in how they manage research uptake since the programme launched in 2012. Data gathered through three successive surveys demonstrate clear trends towards a better embedding of research uptake principles, methods and skills across different components of the university architecture. These achievements would not be possible without the dedicated effort of university leaders and a wide range of engaged staff.

Important for all universities is the sustainability of these gains well past the completion of the DRUSSA programme, as described in detail in Section 6 above. One of the means by which DRUSSA has sought to support institutional objectives to achieve sustainable change has been through the design and implementation of “University Action Plans” – a supportive – but not prescriptive – way for individual universities to identify and manage priority areas for change, and a model which the universities will be able to continue to adapt to manage and implement change in the long term.

For context, at the DRUSSA Symposium held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2013, representatives from each of DRUSSA’s member universities composed a draft research uptake plan for their respective institutions. These plans were the product of individual knowledge and experience, refined through constructive criticism from peers external to the university. Each plan was university-specific and sensitive to the individual contexts, strengths and challenges at the institution concerned. The plans were based on a standard template, which asked participants to list a series of component activities – grouped under seven broad headline areas – to be undertaken at their university. These headlines included:

- actions to ensure university engagement in promoting research uptake
- actions to establish university-wide DRUSSA implementation teams
- actions related to policies relevant to research uptake
- actions to address recording of and access to records of university research
- actions to engage with key stakeholders to promote research uptake
- actions to engage local media to improve their understanding of research and research uptake
- actions to establish research uptake demonstrator models

The template also required participants to suggest timelines for the completion of the suggested activities, as well as indicating the people or units who would be responsible for delivering those activities, in order that universities could effectively measure progress against objectives and take decisions on what resources would be required to see them through.

These individual Action Plans have matured significantly since their inception. In their present form, they exhibit a variety of divergence and contextual difference, in many cases bearing little resemblance to either the original template or the Action Plans of their peers. This is a positive development and entirely in keeping with the goal of introducing context-specific support tools.

The Action Plan initiative is resulting in concrete progress, evident through the current Benchmarking results, feedback from events and on-going conversations around the Action Plans themselves. Examples of progress include:

- new strategies/policies that address research uptake activities and research uptake management;
- development of new units/offices with responsibilities for research uptake activities;
- development of new job descriptions for staff that includes research uptake and research uptake management responsibilities;
- promotion and profiling of research uptake demonstrator projects, and;
- strategies for leveraging sustainable benefit from DRUSSA activities.

The sub-sections below examine the seven key themes extracted from the body of Action Plans and discusses key approaches and challenges that have emerged over the course of the programme.

Actions to ensure university engagement in promoting research uptake management

There is uniform consensus across partner universities that the DRUSSA Leaders and Champions have a prominent role to play in this area. High on the list of proposed activities is for the Leaders and Champions to facilitate the introduction of research uptake issues as a standing item at regular high-level meetings (senate research committee meetings, for example) and, more broadly, at faculty level research meetings. This has, in some cases, translated into research uptake practices informing these bodies' planning for existing university activities, such as open days, student placements in industry and research newsletters.

Universities have also sought to maximise the impact of DRUSSA workshops and conferences by scheduling follow-up activities that relate to issues emerging from the events. Examples include the construction of detailed stakeholder maps, updating institutional website content and hosting research uptake 'road shows' within individual faculties/units across the university, where information is cascaded to staff to inform a broader base of staff about research uptake management initiatives.

Similarly, a number of Action Plans detail approaches to leveraging the knowledge and skills accrued by staff who have completed CREST's training courses as part of DRUSSA, whether at Ph.D., Masters or short course level. A variety of different approaches have been taken in this respect, including the appointment of trained staff to dedicated research uptake support roles and deploying trained staff to facilitate workshops on research uptake for junior staff.

Actions to establish university-wide DRUSSA implementation teams

There is considerable overlap between this section and the previous one, and the character of each university's development in this area will depend on who they choose to participate in the implementation teams and how they elect to structure their respective teams. There is no one prescriptive method for how this should be achieved and each university is encouraged to pursue methods that they believe will work best for their members. For example, some universities have convened internal teams of 20-plus members of staff across the whole of the university to drive forward research uptake initiatives, whereas others have preferred to pare their implementation teams down to a core of six or seven. Regular meetings between DRUSSA team members and/or the establishment of an institutional discussion platform for team members have been suggested as avenues for coordinated progress on this front.

There has also been considerable thought given to these implementation teams once DRUSSA concludes. Some universities are preparing to drop the DRUSSA name and reconstitute the teams to focus on future and on-going activities as detailed in their new research uptake policy documents; others are focusing on maintaining the DRUSSA teams to capitalise on the recognised narrative of change that has built up within their universities over the course of the programme.

Actions related to policies relevant to research uptake

One particular area of dissonance amongst Action Plans is in approaches to introduce research uptake into university policy landscapes. Some institutions have opted to implement a discrete research uptake policy, while others have embedded research uptake elements within other policies, such as broader research policies, intellectual property policies, technology transfer and community engagement policies, and human resource policies. DRUSSA has facilitated greater inter-university networking on this issue, connecting universities that are at a similar stage in the process – as well as linking universities at a relatively advanced stage with those at a modest level of development – in order to foster shared good practice. The Research Uptake Management Working Group (RUMWG) has played a pivotal role in this respect by capturing and disseminating a series of good practice approaches, drawn from the experiences of DRUSSA universities.

Once such policies have been implemented, universities will need to give thought to how to implement and publicise new policy issues relevant to research uptake. As mentioned above, current suggestions indicate that universities will be looking to leverage those staff members who have engaged in DRUSSA short courses and degree programmes, as well as the broader DRUSSA implementation teams, to achieve these objectives. An issue only infrequently addressed in the Action Plans is the need for a process to monitor and evaluate research uptake policy elements once they have been implemented. This is crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of the policies, and will need to be given careful thought by member universities as they progress through the process of implementing new policies in this area.

Actions to address recording and access to records of university research

Actions in this section are typically centred on the establishment of institutional repositories for research, as well as the most effective strategies to ensure that existing repositories are maintained, accessible, user-friendly and kept up to date. These actions are typically resource heavy and require significant funds in the set-up phase. Unfortunately, DRUSSA lacks the funds to directly support such activities and universities have been exploring ways to access alternative funding avenues to support their proposals.

Actions to engage with key stakeholders to promote research uptake

Under this theme, many Action Plans list the need to record and maintain contact with current stakeholders, the use of targeted media engagement to interact with key stakeholders (including the use of institutional websites, other media assets and university open days) and appropriately leveraging alumni connections. While these can all be effective ways of engaging with external stakeholders, they do not specifically assist in the primary task of identifying a university's key stakeholders. Exercises to help identify key external stakeholders are conducted at DRUSSA university planning workshops, and universities are encouraged to re-examine past attempts at research uptake (successful or otherwise) to identify what has worked in the past, which stakeholders are receptive to what, and where their institutional strengths and weaknesses lie.

Stakeholder engagement also includes strengthening internal university collaboration. In this, it has proved effective for universities to identify the pockets of research uptake good practice that already exist within their institutions and seek to spread those practices to other units. As such, internal stakeholder mapping exercises can form a useful initiative to complement external stakeholder mapping. A beneficial starting point for such exercises has been to consider the practices of the public health and/or medicine faculties, which typically, but not uniformly, support disciplines with a strong, historical focus on demand-driven research uptake activities.

Actions to engage local media to improve their understanding of research and research uptake

Different strategies identified to address this issue include: establishing consistent contact with the media (regular open days, periodic press releases and similar); providing training in media engagement for academics (and, crucially, developing capacity within the university to carry out and reinforce this training); establishing closer links between academics and university public relations offices, and; the targeted use of university media assets (such as radio, for example).

These are all positive avenues to achieve greater traction with local media. Indeed, in many instances within the programme, efforts in these areas have been built upon activities and approaches that universities have long engaged in. The effective contextualisation and combination of these approaches, informed by stakeholder analysis activities discussed above, is key. Universities benefit from the identification of approaches that play to their current strengths and exploit pre-existing structures.

In response to demand, DRUSSA has developed and hosted training for partner university staff members on these activities. As with the broader suite of training within DRUSSA mentioned above, it is incumbent upon universities to effectively capture, disseminate and leverage the skills and knowledge acquired by staff who have completed this training.

Actions to establish research uptake demonstrator models

This section of the Action Plan was intended to support member universities to uncover and celebrate specific, contemporary examples of good practice in research uptake taking place within their own institutions, manifested through specific research projects. The examples collected are many and varied, illustrating the application of improved research uptake methods through research conducted across different disciplines. They serve to illustrate that research uptake activities: are not entirely alien to orthodox academic practice within member universities, that they are activities that can be enhanced by targeted research uptake management approaches, and, that lend themselves well as case studies for workshop and training events for university staff.

A number of universities have sought to build on the initial idea of the demonstrator model and started to source, collect and record many examples of research uptake, thereby building up a repository of case studies for subsequent analysis.

Observations and lessons learnt

Universities have reported that, while progress is being observed, many challenges have been encountered. Programmes of institutional change, by their very nature, take time. Cooperation and buy-in from a variety of

university stakeholders must be cultivated; the introduction and construction of a research uptake culture is challenging, and acknowledging this is a vital part of the process.

One of the essential lessons learnt over the course of the programme is the benefit of anticipating opportunities - those that already exist within a particular university and/or those that emerge from broader engagement with other DRUSSA partners and associated organisations - and using the Action Plans to leverage those opportunities. Positive change has come more easily in instances where the programme has been able to support and/or enhance processes and resources that are already in place or are in a planning stage.

The monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan initiative introduced an important challenge for the programme. In some ways, the deliberate attempt to move away from prescriptive or uniform approaches to building these Action Plans has made objective comparison between these Action Plans difficult. For this reason, DRUSSA developed a list of Critical Success Indicators (CSIs) to capture and represent the many and different activities achieved.

The CSI framework was designed to allow the DRUSSA programme to measure instances of like-for-like change across partner universities, even when the individual objectives they set out within their Action Plans were not uniform. Whilst measuring change across institutions is the primary remit of the benchmarking process itself – one important distinction with the CSI framework (apart from the fact that data is not survey based) is that the latter pertains specifically to aspects derived from institutionally-designed targets and objectives and to DRUSSA tools and activities.

Critical Success Indicators for Measuring Change in DRUSSA Universities

Table 6: Critical success indicators

Strategic Level

- The university has completed a strategic benchmarking management programme.
- The university's organisational leadership is aware of the value of research uptake and has committed to improving systems and processes to support it.
- The university's research policy/strategy includes objectives to improve research uptake.
- The university's leadership ensures that external policy issues are addressed in the university's research policy/strategy.
- The university has a clear policy or strategy that includes research uptake objectives and is supported by senior management.

Operational Level

- The university has completed research uptake awareness raising and focus workshops.
- Leaders and Champions have identified priority research uptake challenges and selected actions that address barriers to achieving change.
- The university has developed a defined action plan that has clear goals, timelines and resources.

Information Management

- Organisational units within the university collect data reflecting research being undertaken, its status and planned uptake activity.
- The university has clear mechanisms in locating research and research uptake data.

Organisational Structure

- The university has an office/unit with research uptake responsibilities.

Human Resources

- The university has staff with job descriptions that incorporate research uptake responsibilities.
- The university has made learning materials available for staff on communicating research.
- The university has induction programmes for staff on research uptake and how it can be integrated into work.

Communication

- The university's institutional website showcases research uptake successes.
- The university hosts open day or similar events to showcase research and promote partnerships.
- News briefs and publications on research are produced by the universities.
- The university's research communications activities are being monitored and evaluated.

Stakeholder Engagement

- The university has developed stakeholder maps.
- Stakeholders/end-users are consulted/involved as part of ongoing research projects.
- The university has strengthened relations with policy makers.
- The university has strengthened relations with industry.
- The university has education programmes for researchers to include stakeholder/end-user engagements throughout all phases of a research cycle and plan for pathways to uptake.

While each of the achievements listed have been observed at least one DRUSSA university, it is not anticipated (or required) that any one university will realise all the points raised by the end of the programme; rather, the CSIs are useful for helping the ACU to identify groups of universities who may be pursuing similar action plan initiatives. It is also anticipated that the CSIs will constitute a useful tool in their own right for DRUSSA members after the programme, as they seek to revise their Action Plans to address new challenges and set new goals.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall conclusions

As in 2012 and 2014, the 2016 DRUSSA benchmarking process involved three major phases:

- The initial benchmarking survey, used to collect, compare, and analyse quantitative data and particular examples of research uptake activity
- The 2016 Leadership and Benchmarking Conference, at which Leaders and Champions of the programme convene to discuss in greater detail ways in which institutional change has been achieved and is being developed
- The final Benchmarking Report, including survey data, but also further summaries and conclusions from the conference, and deeper analysis of trends that emerge from discussions at the conference.

Taking in lessons from both the Survey and the Conference, we now have a more extensive and longitudinal perspective on the change that partner universities have been driving since 2012. For example, one notable area of change concerns the establishment of new offices to provide management of research uptake activity, or the incorporation of research uptake management into existing offices or structures. There has also been a significant growth in reported collaboration between offices and units within universities which share an interest or a potential role in the management of research uptake, including libraries, public relations offices, marketing offices, IT units, Vice-Chancellors' offices, extension offices, and research management offices.

The survey findings and conference discussions also suggest a trend towards an increased awareness of, and support for, research uptake among university leaders. The highest levels of university management were perceived, on balance, to have the highest level of enthusiasm for research uptake activity, which is an essential component to realising greater implementation of uptake processes across an institution.

We have also seen strong examples of stakeholder engagement and the wider communication of research, with evidence of growth between 2012 and 2016 including the establishment of new channels of university media, such as radio stations and dedicated research webpages. The majority of survey respondents told us that they now regard engagement with external stakeholders to be either a high or a very high priority. This represents a dramatic change from 2012, when most respondents expressed interest in research uptake, but generally reported that research uptake had not yet been established as an institutional priority.

As the DRUSSA programme is now in its final year, we proceed with some clear indicators of change, and lessons as to how universities can continue to drive further change in their plans for rolling out and institutionalising research uptake in the future.

Recommendations emerging from the survey

Each of the three benchmarking surveys conducted over the course of the DRUSSA programme have provided distinct levels of insight regarding the evolving place of research uptake at partner universities. The initial survey in 2012 helped us to establish a baseline for how each institution managed research uptake activity, how this activity was resourced, where responsibility for it fell and what challenges were on the horizon. The second survey in 2014 demonstrated the type of changes being undertaken by universities to progress against their objectives, and how this compared not only between regions and years, but also between the discrete themes of *strategy*, *processes*, *stakeholder engagement* and *communication*.

This third and final survey has allowed us to substantiate trend lines and gain a better understanding of both the pace and the degree of change that partner universities have seen over the full duration of the programme. This teaches us not only how the programme has helped support institutional change, but also where this change is *sustainable* – and how it will be driven in the future.

The 2016 Benchmarking Conference was an important opportunity not only to explore, discuss and better understand the findings from the survey, but also to project our experience in honing institutional mechanisms to sustain the change that's been seen so far. In this way, the Conference was essential to establishing not only new learning, but also clear recommendations for future action – as reflected in the Conference Consensus document generated at the Conference's conclusion, and which has now also been disseminated to all Leaders, Champions and delegates.

We can now turn our attention to some of the key lessons that have emerged from the survey and the conference, which can inform action for the future.

- University leaders have sustained a high level of enthusiasm and engagement with research uptake activity, which has set the stage for a prominent increase in university strategies that focus on research uptake. This leadership is essential, and the consolidation of consensus among senior leaders as to the benefits of research uptake is highly encouraging.
- Junior researchers and academics, conversely, have been reported as harder to reach, with respondents telling us that a research uptake culture does not seem to be as strong (or as uniform) among the early career research cohort. This is a significant challenge to the objective of sustainable and long-term change. However, universities are already addressing this challenge head-on – respondents have indicated a significant shift in how institutional resources are allocated to support skills and capacity, with more offices now mandated to govern research uptake and more incentives and training opportunities offered. This will be essential in building early career researchers' capacity and knowledge about research uptake methods and benefits.
- There is now greater consensus about the benefits to strengthening stakeholder engagement practices than there was in 2012, but there are nevertheless frustrations. We might interpret this two ways – firstly, while universities are putting stronger emphasis on stakeholder engagement as a strategic good, the external stakeholders *themselves* have not always been as receptive or as easy to reach. And secondly, as research uptake as a net benefit to the university is more widely agreed by senior leaders, expectations and targets become ever-more important (and standards of success are raised, as well).
- This suggests that stakeholders might be brought into the research agenda-setting process in different ways and at different times. Respondents tell us that representation of government and industry on university research councils is a common and successful practice – but consultation with stakeholders at the research dissemination stage, as well as at the research project design stage, is reported as relatively less common.
- As these engagement processes are being developed, so are processes to ascertain the level of research impact. Partner universities have demonstrated significant change since 2012 in this regard, with the number of institutions reporting mechanisms to assess research impact more than doubling between 2012 and 2016. While measuring the impact of research is often a long-term prospect, it is very encouraging to note that DRUSSA universities have indicated that they are strengthening their approaches to carrying out such measurements. This bodes well for the process of stakeholder engagement as well, since universities with such mechanisms should be better placed to take

decisions on which stakeholder engagement methods are bearing fruit, and can derive and apply lessons from these experiences in future.

As we enter this final phase of the DRUSSA programme, it is the application of lessons learned to future activity which become more important than ever. It must be recognised that, while DRUSSA has helped to establish a supportive framework for research uptake – through the provision of skills training, sharing learning on policy and practice, establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and supporting stakeholder engagement – it is the universities themselves that have established context-relevant targets and objectives for institutional change, and that have marshalled institutional resources in pursuit of these objectives. This positions partner universities well in continuing their efforts long past the conclusion of the DRUSSA programme itself, drawing on the institutional expertise and supported by internal incentive structures that universities have worked hard to develop.