# Semi-structured interview with a Professor in the Faculty of Health and Medicine

**Interviewer**: So, here’s a copy of the University of Reading’s statement on Open Research. Please take some time to have a read through, OK?

**Interviewee**: OK. Thanks.

**Interviewer:** So, what is your opinion on Open Research?

**Interviewee:** It’s very important for research to be as open as possible... but... it has to be... conducted in such a manner as to not inhibit research that can’t be as open... so yeah, as much as we can make open as possible, definitely.

**Interviewer:** And, do you think that there’s a role for senior leadership to play in relation to Open Research... perhaps in terms of promoting Open Research practices and paradigms?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. I think it…so in terms of promoting practices and paradigms then I think... given that Open Research is important... senior researchers and people, senior people in the university who have a research related role, for example, Associate Deans of Research and Research Directors...could usefully highlight and undertake where possible...so yeah in terms of the paradigms they could highlight them and make sure people understood them and kind of give them airtime basically... and people who... so some of those people are the same people as the people who are the researchers taking you know researchers within the university undertaking significantly externally funded research and strong activity. Some of them aren’t. There’s kind of, you know, a sort of overlap between management and researchers and some people within the management structure are personally undertaking less research and some than others and some people who are undertaking massive amounts of research have... have no senior role in a management structure. For those who are in the management, yes absolutely, the promoting it and for those who are recognised as research leaders by their activity being encouraged to do a bit where they can, both of those things would be good, and then of course there will be some people that are both.

**Interviewer:** And... looking at it from another perspective, do you think that there’s a role for the community to play.

**Interviewee:** So the community of researchers, yes, in that... so for example, in terms, of Open Access publications... so there’s a responsibility for the community of researchers to actually ensure that they are working to make sure their publications are Open Access in [institutional repository] and those kind of things which is a part of Open Research...to ensure... there’s a responsibility on every single researcher to make sure that work is reproduceable... which crosses over with openness... so, in terms of... there should be documentation, for example in analytical work there should be documented code... in other work there should be documented protocols and where possible, those should be made available. If there are limitations around the availability of those for various reasons that’s fine but it should be that they are there, so that if somebody was to get the same ethical permissions and approvals that they had they could come in and reproduce the work. So... so yeah, so there’s a responsibility to individuals in the community to undertake their work in such a way that it has ability to be as open as possible in other words some other people can come in and it’s transparent, they can see exactly what they’ve done, given they have the right permissions to do so.

And then... also to make people aware of what’s being done so that the broader community... so for example, patients within the NHS, understand what we can and can’t do with their data as it stands and understand... and are given information about what we potentially could do were we given ethical approval to access certain sets of data, which would improve their care. And so.. so... making our research open in a different way in a way that it can be understood by other people so that they can see the value of sharing their own personal data is quite important.

**Interviewer:** I am just going to hand over to you now a modified list based on the Eight Pillars of Open Science, as described by the EU Commission.

**Interviewee:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** looking at this list, we have a Lancaster University Open Research Statement, Open Research Rewards and Incentives, Metrics to Measure Openness, Open Access to Publications, Open Peer Review, Open Research Skills and Training, Open Research Systems and Services, and Open Data. So, looking at the list, are there any particular areas that you would like to discuss further?

 **[Long pause]**

**Interviewee:** U-hum.

**Interviewee:** Metrics sounds like a disaster...

**Interviewer:** In what sense?

**Interviewee:** [laughs] because we have so many already... so... if we bring metrics in, they have to be really, really carefully thought about that we’re just not adding more paperwork to a system and actually giving people less time to make their do their research and make it open, because actually we’ve got them filling in paperwork. So that’s that... the metrics have to be really, really carefully thought about if they’re to be implemented.

Open Access to publication is kind of, it seems to be going fairly well in terms of, people understand the need for it and people, you know, are responding to it and researchers are. So, in my role within the department, I get to chase people up who haven’t put their papers in and it’s not very many. Although, there is a big, kind of caveat in that is that we only get to chase up papers that people have at least started to put in. I don’t think it’s likely, but it could be that we have a researcher who is putting nothing in, and we wouldn’t actually ever know to chase them up because nothing comes through in an automated way and it would be really helpful for researchers if it did. And you would get, probably, a higher response. But, but I know the library are doing that that where they can. It’s just not…it’s nothing we as a university could put pressure on externally to get systems to do.

Open Peer Review can be… it’s a good idea in some circumstances, but it can be quite difficult to manage realistically... and that’s you know obviously you have you know if you put a grant in you’ve got 5 people looking at it so if one of them is has a biased opinion that should be countered by the rest. But actually, if you legitimately criticise someone’s research, and your name is on that criticism... you risk, you know, people aren’t always fair-minded and so there are challenges to Open Peer Review. So for journals, I think there are some journals that only do Open Peer Review and that’s a good idea. When it comes to grants, I think it might need to be a bit more carefully managed. It’s... it’s not a bad idea. It’s just not straightforward.

Open Data is a good idea where possible again with the understanding that it’s not always possible and that sometimes the... the requirements put on people to make it open are a bit limiting.

For example… I totally support open data, but we have to realistic - ... we can’t just go around saying everybody has to make their data open and researchers have to do whatever it takes to make it open because we will limit the amount of research they can do if we do that.

Open Research skills and training and systems and services…I guess that’s useful?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And I think perhaps to mitigate some of those things that you’ve just... touched on, for example, you know there is recognition, both at the funding stage, prefunding stage and output stage that not all research data can be made openly available. There are really, very good reasons why you may not be able to make your data open, for example, where doing so may contravene the law or breach contract, there may be commercial sensitivities or data protection issues. So, training plays a role here, in communicating the risks or ethical dilemmas and explaining how they may be mitigated.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah!

**Interviewer:** So, absolutely those kind of training opportunities that... that both explain to researchers... how they may be able to make the outputs open and where there may not.

**Interviewer:** So, given all that we’ve touched on so far do you think that there are any ways that the university can effectively support Open Research?

**Interviewee:** So, if I took, literally, Open Access to publications... well one of the ways the university could support it is with administrative assistance to researchers. So, what happens, is, for... for me, a paper gets accepted, there’s a... there’s an... an I don’t know PDF proof of that paper... and I need to get that on [the institutional repository] I need to get details on there, within 3 months. That’s a significant, kind of piece of administrative burden you are putting on a whole bunch of individuals. And so, if you provided. If there was a... if there was somebody, I could send it to and say this has been accepted can you upload it, it would be an immediate support to Open Research and you would find people do it a lot more effectively. And you would find that, also the chasing for author accepted manuscripts that we have to do wouldn’t be quite so much. So, there are some administrative as- aspects to this that could be supported.

And so, when you talk about you know when you talked about additional metrics...if you’re creating paperwork for academics that’s not supportive- it’s actually detrimental. And so... Open Access is kind of paperwork, but I get it, I like, I see the importance of it, but there are ways that there could be more supported with time.

And then... I think like, you know things like the research data sessions that you run in the library runs are helpful in getting people to understand so that what you know in that environment there can be discussions around what Open Research means. Putting something on the programme early on for new staff around what do we mean by Open Research at Lancaster and what’s available, you know what has to be done. So yeah, the stuff that you do that’s kind of got a research angle that pulls people in because their interested in what’s going to be there but bringing out these discussions in that environment.

We should also make a point of sharing news about specific projects with an Open Research angle internally. For example, viathe staff intranet.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I think that’s a wonderful idea.

**Interviewer:** Just to finish up, are there any areas that we didn’t touch on that you think are relevant to Open Research that are worth... commenting on?

**Interviewee:** No, I think we’ve covered a lot, thanks.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for your time today.