

Established employees' experience of continuing professional development in SCONUL member libraries

1. Introduction

- 1.1 SCONUL, the professional association for academic and national libraries (www.sconul.ac.uk), is seeking to increase understanding of a range of issues related to organisational development, and to develop tools and materials to support senior leaders in SCONUL member libraries with workforce planning and management.
- 1.2 The academic and national library sector is rapidly changing and SCONUL has recently undertaken work to map the future of the profession (see <https://sconul.ac.uk/publication/mapping-the-future-of-academic-libraries>).
- 1.3 To meet current and future needs, SCONUL member libraries require a workforce with appropriate and continually developing skills sets. A key area of focus must be on established staff who will continue to make up a large proportion of the workforce in the years to come. Ensuring that these staff can actively develop appropriate skills sets throughout their careers is key to the successful future of the profession.
- 1.4 This brief is for a research project focussed on understanding the professional development needs and experiences of the established workforce in SCONUL member libraries. It is part of a phased approach to developing our current workforce, and outcomes from this research will be used to underpin further phases of our work.
- 1.5 For more information on SCONUL members, please see <https://www.sconul.ac.uk/members-and-representatives> .

2. Project management

The project will be overseen by the four project contacts identified below. Kate Price will be the primary contact and will act as the main liaison and point of contact to ensure that the aims and the objectives of the project are met. Rosie Jones and Antony Brewerton will be involved in regular fortnightly catch ups and the key decisions at each stage of the project as set out below. Ann Rossiter is the key contact for financial and contractual arrangements and is the budget holder.

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3. The research brief

SCONUL is seeking to commission research that explores the understanding and experience of established employees in member libraries in relation to their development and progression in order to inform workforce support and development by library leaders. Specific questions to investigate include:

- a. how employees have gained the skills and knowledge to perform their roles as they are today
- b. employees' understanding of the changing nature of library roles and how these may continue to develop
- c. employees' understanding of the current and future requirements of the library by their institution
- d. how employees are evolving their skills and knowledge in order to adapt to the changing nature of the workplace, or in order to progress in their future careers
- e. their own personal ambition in relation to development and / or progression
- f. what success factors can be identified for effective continuing professional development, at the personal or organisational level

- g. what barriers can be identified to successful continuing professional development, at the personal or organisational level
- h. perceptions of the boundaries between “professional”, “para-professional” and “non-professional” aspects of work in member libraries, and how existing employees navigate these boundaries
- i. demographic data which may help to elucidate employees’ experience of continuing professional development in a variety of ways.

4. Note on scope and methodology

- 4.1 Appropriate methodologies for carrying out the research should be articulated as part of the response to this project proposal. These may include focus groups, surveys or other approaches.
- 4.2 Employees engaging with the research should have been working in the profession for over five years, and may be employed in a range of different roles, including those which have emerged recently. They may or may not have formal qualifications in library or information management, and could have entered employment in SCONUL member libraries through a variety of routes. We are seeking perspectives both from employees who have remained in the same role and/or workplace for some time, and from employees who have moved through different roles and/or workplaces through their career. Senior leaders are not the focus of this research.
- 4.3 The research should cover a cross section of the SCONUL membership, including national research libraries, research-intensive universities, and teaching-focused HE institutions of different sizes.
- 4.4 Care should be taken to ensure that there is an appropriate geographical spread of member libraries engaged in the research. Any geographical, regional or national differences identified during the research should be articulated in the report.
- 4.5 Please note that while we are interested in demographic data as an aspect of this research, the specific experiences of BAME employees and new entrants to the profession are being explored as separate strands of research. For further information see:
<https://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/report-on-bame-staff-experiences-of-academic-and-research-libraries>
<https://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/early-career-professionals-in-academic-libraries>

5. Research outputs

- 5.1 The principal output will be an insight report exploring issues related to continuing professional development for established employees currently based in SCONUL member libraries, including the elements identified above plus any other relevant themes that emerge during the research. This should be written in a professional and accessible style suitable for publication and for its target audience of senior staff within SCONUL institutions.
- 5.2 We will ask the project team appointed to present early or interim findings at a future meeting of the SCONUL Organisational Development Strategy Group and to refine the final report in response to comments from that group.
- 5.3 We will also require the report’s authors to present the findings to SCONUL members at an event later in the year.
- 5.4 The report will inform thought leadership by SCONUL, including the sharing of best practice/practical tools to support the SCONUL membership that will be developed in further phases of this project.
- 5.5 Please note that SCONUL will retain ownership of the data collected and all outputs from the research project, in any form of media. The final report will be published under a CC BY licence.
- 5.6 SCONUL will be responsible for the design and production of the final report.

6. Project timescales

Stage	Action	Timing
Tendering process	Project brief advertised	3 February 2020
	Deadline for receipt of completed submissions	5pm on Monday 2 March 2020
	Shortlisting carried out	w/c 2 March 2020
	Interviews with shortlisted consultants held	w/c 16 March 2020
	Consultancy awarded	Friday 20 March
Research process	Phone briefing with SCONUL team and work commenced	w/c 23 March

Stage	Action	Timing
	Early outcomes of research presented at SCONUL Organisational Strategy Group meeting	Friday 19 June
	Final written report submitted to SCONUL team	Monday 31 August 2020
Publication and presentation	Final report presented at SCONUL Organisational Development Strategy Group meeting	Thursday 17 September 2020
	Final report presented to SCONUL member institutions via an event to be organised by SCONUL	October / November 2020

7. Project costs

The project should be costed at no more than £15,000 (including VAT and all internal and external expenses).

8. How to respond to this brief

8.1 Consultants are expected to provide a proposal for the completion of the project within the defined timescale and budget noted above.

8.2 As part of your responses, please:

- a. provide evidence of a track record in conducting research of this type and in this field
- b. provide details of your proposed methodology
- c. provide a rationale for the methodology that you have proposed
- d. provide a fully costed project plan, showing hourly rates, inclusive of VAT and any travel or other external expenses
- e. provide details of the anticipated scale of the research that can be carried out within the project budget and timescale (e.g. number of employees to be interviewed, proportion of member libraries to be covered, or number of focus groups to be carried out)
- f. identify any risks that you anticipate to the success of the project and how you plan to mitigate these
- g. provide evidence of having successfully employed the chosen methodology in previous projects
- h. set out your experience and knowledge of ethical frameworks associated with personal data capture and provide details of the ethical framework you intend using on this project.

- i. provide the CVs of all those who will be working on the project along with a statement of the role they would fulfil
 - j. provide confirmation of your ability to complete the work to the proposed timescale.
- 8.3 Selection will be based on an evaluation against the criteria above and the response to the brief, taking account of the cost effectiveness of the proposed approach.
- 8.4 A phone or skype interview will be scheduled to discuss the brief and the approach proposed by shortlisted consultants.
- 8.5 Questions about the brief should be addressed in writing to Kate Price at the email address above, copying in other members of the project team. We will endeavour to answer points raised on the brief and provide further background on SCONUL if required.

9. About SCONUL

- 9.1 SCONUL (www.sconul.ac.uk) represents all university libraries in the UK and Ireland, irrespective of mission group, as well as national libraries and many of the UK's colleges of higher education. SCONUL promotes awareness of the role of academic libraries in supporting research excellence and student achievement and employability, and represents their views and interests to government, regulators and other stakeholders. It helps academic libraries collaborate to deliver services efficiently, including through shared services, and to share knowledge and best practice. More information about SCONUL's strategy, activities and programmes can be found via <https://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/about-sconul>.
- 9.2 SCONUL members are the libraries themselves, with the heads of library service making up the Executive Board which is responsible for governance and for setting the strategy for the organisation. SCONUL also has a number of groups supporting the strategy and ensuring that the academic library community is informed about, and engaged with, the major issues and challenges facing the library sector.
- 9.3 One of these groups is the Organisational Development Strategy Group chaired by Caroline Taylor, University Librarian at the University of Leicester. The aim of the group is to provide support to members in their own workforce planning. There are three sub-groups looking at different aspects of workforce planning:
- diversity (and how we foster it)
 - the pipeline for new talent
 - developing the current workforce.

- 9.4 This brief relates to the third of these sub-groups and will be used to inform a wider set of outcomes including identifying good practice, advice and guidance on developing the current workforce relevant to library directors, and bringing outputs together into practical advice for members.