



Research Administration in Europe:

Shaping a New Profession

**in Higher Education
and Research Institutions.
Introducing the EARMA
European Certificate in
Research Management**

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The field of action or the wide range of functions that today's research managers and administrators (RMAs) perform, has rapidly developed over the past twenty years. One of the reasons underlying this development may be seen in the process of knowledge production, realised through the contribution of Higher Education (HE) and research in particular, to the economy and wellbeing of nations: this trend of development has rapidly transformed the HE sector from a prior 'protected' system to a highly competitive environment (Nhlapo & Swanepoel, 2010). Within this challenging environment, research management is acknowledged as a relatively new field of investigation and thus the number of researchers (or 'insider' researchers) who deal with issues relating to it is on the rise (Shelley, 2009; Allen-Collinson, 2009; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009; Schuetzenmeister, 2010; Poli & Toom, 2012).

Among the issues that have been investigated, the following stand on the top of the list: the variety of roles and how RMAs have progressively expanded the boundaries of their action (Shelley, 2009); the choice of research administration as a career option, for instance for scientifically trained students (Schuetzenmeister, 2010); the relationships among RMAs and academics, including issues of identification and 'moral exclusion' from other university administrators' groups (Allen-Collinson, 2009). But many more issues fall on the shoulders of RMAs engaged in today's research and they call for a deeper understanding. In this perspective the meaning of the profession of RMAs has developed and gained importance in all research-intensive institutions, not only in HE (Green & Langley, 2009).

Today's RMAs, as one of the occupational groups within the HE sector and research institutions, have striven hard to get recognized either for their contribution to the research process, or for their professionalism in managing the increasing complexity of research. There is no doubt that in today's research environment RMAs hold a wide range of roles and responsibilities: (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009). Simultaneously, a more strategic and professional research management has been acknowledged as one of the main gaps to be filled by universities (Green & Langley, 2009); this since RMAs more frequently work on complex projects within a much more complex societal and organizational environment.

RMAs may be considered the models of the new and specialised professionals described by Gornall (1999), namely specialists in research management who deal with the social, organizational, and in addition with the political context of today's research. Furthermore, among all the professional groups, RMAs may be seen as more blended than other professionals in today's HE. Blended professionals are those individuals with academic

credentials, such as master's and doctoral qualifications, but also those who have built their expertise in other sectors (different from HE) and then brought it to HE, who are able to perform quasi-academic functions (Whitchurch, 2008). Blended RMAs have been investigated either as RMAs coming from a scientific background or those already in HE who have enrolled in academic pathways later-on in their career (Bertero et al., 2012). Therefore, they perform a wide array of functions in-between academic and professional domains. They also more often go beyond the familiar working spaces shared with academics and occupy new and unexplored spaces in today's research. These blended RMAs are among the main actors in today's European as well as international research and the target group of the EARMA European Certificate Programme.

EARMA's European Certificate has been developed with the aim to equip today's RMAs with the set of skills needed to effectively engage in the European research environment and optimize their contribution. The target group of participants for EARMA's European Certificate may include European RMAs as well as all other professionals engaged in European framework programmes (e.g. partners from other sectors). This large target group comes as a consequence of the more competitive and challenging international dimension introduced by Horizon 2020.

The EARMA qualification has been developed as a response to the complex and rapidly evolving setting, which can be described as a multi-player and international arena for research (Andersen, in press; Newman and Poli, 2014). In fact, players come from different HE or research institutions, countries, and consequently different systems of HE. EU bodies, the industry sector, non-profit organisations, consultancy but also several others contribute to this complexity. In this multiple-player arena it is obvious that all players do not perform alike; for this reason, the modules of the training programme have been developed to enable participants from different working practices and cultures to easily grasp the European framework of research. Cross-cultural understanding is key in today's research management and RMAs are expected, much more than in the past, to be prepared to liaise with a heterogeneous group of partners.

EARMA's qualification has been shaped in collaboration with the UK Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) using its framework of professional development that has mapped RMAs' tasks, and then developed the set of skills needed by RMAs to carry out these tasks more effectively. Furthermore, the certificate is part of a suite of three professional qualifications, which also includes the EARMA European Certificate in Research Administration (ADMIN) and the EARMA European Certificate in

EARMA EUROPEAN CERTIFICATE					
Years of Experience	0-2	2-4	4-6	6-8	8-
ADMIN		2 year			
MANAGEMENT			2 year		
LEADER					2 year

Figure 1. The EARMA European Certificate programme and target groups with indicative timelines

Research Leadership (LEADER). Figure 1 outlines the target group of each certificate: once the programme is finally settled, a certified training that goes from the time of entering the profession to that of becoming leaders or senior experts in the field will be offered.

The certificate aims to improve the overall ability to support excellence in research across the research lifecycle and deal with a range of different EU funding schemes. The mandatory units of the two-year long Management qualification scheme include: (1) Developing and Implementing Policy and Strategy, (2) Gender Dimensions in Research and Research Management, (3) Managing and Supporting the Development of a Project Portfolio, (4) Understanding the International Research Environment and (5) Working with Management

Information. In addition, participants can choose from a set of optional units: (1) Developing New Funding Opportunities, (2) Managing Legal and Regulatory Requirements, (3) Optimizing Unit and Organisational Performance, and (4) Supporting the Development and Implementation of Organisational Systems and Processes. Out-of-the-box are the modules that deal with gender in research (Horizon 2020 stresses the gender dimension), the understanding of the international research environment with its set of implications and challenges (e.g. cultural issues and conflicts that may arise), but also working with management information, among others.

This certificate may be the gateway to recognition of the profession of research manager in the HE sector as well as in research institutions, since it

is approved by Ofqual and regulated through the common qualifications and credit framework (QCF), building on ECTS-credits (European Credit Transfer System) that is fully acknowledged throughout Europe. The qualification has links with the main professional associations of RMAs in Europe and internationally.

Although recognition of the research manager profession is far from established, we use the definition of a profession as a 'degree-level education with ongoing training and a mutual calling' (Moore, 1970), but also a set of common and shared values. Research manager can be seen as an 'emerging profession' (Langley, 2012), and EARMA's qualification is intended to be a driver for professional recognition. ■

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