

Research Strategy

2021-24

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Committee Approval

Committee	Committee Action	Date
QAEC	Recommended approval	21 July 2021
Academic Committee		28 July 2021
	Date in force	1 September 2021

This Research Strategy 2021-24 will be reviewed annually by our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). Any amendments will be subject to approval by the Academic Committee.

1. Introduction

Sub-Goal 5.2 of our Strategic Framework 2021-24 provides that we will support staff to engage in research that has an internal and/or external impact.

Building upon this Sub-Goal, this Research Strategy 2021-24 sets out our three Research Goals and Objectives (see **Section 3** below), and our definitions of research and scholarship, impact and research environment (see **Section 2** below).

Our Research Strategy places the development and empowerment of our staff and students at its core in supporting their efforts to engage in research. This helps us to ensure that we retain and continue to recruit highly qualified, experienced and motivated members of staff who recognise and embrace the importance of research-informed teaching to enhance the student experience.

Whilst we recognise that most of the research activity will be undertaken by our academic staff, our Research Strategy will create an environment that encourages and supports all staff members to engage in research that has internal and/or external impact.

We recognise that being research active is something that takes time to 'achieve' and staff need to be provided with opportunities to start their research journey. As such, this strategy outlines the support we give to new researchers as well as that provided to those with more experience.

The quality of our design and delivery of courses, particularly at Level 6 and beyond, will be enhanced by ensuring that our teaching is informed by research. Our Research Strategy strengthens our commitment to establishing and widening the participation of all staff members (academic and professional services) in research.

Through the implementation of this Research Strategy, we will develop a submission for the post-2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Through our research outputs and the impact of such outputs, we will raise our regional, national and international profile. This profile will be further enhanced through our submission to the post-2021 REF.

2. Definitions

2.1 Research and scholarship

All staff (academic and professional services) are developed, supported and empowered to engage in research.

All academic staff are required to engage in scholarship.

We have simple, clear and distinct definitions of research and scholarship:

Research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared¹. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, and society; to the public and voluntary sectors; and also to ourselves. It includes research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs², for example:

¹ This definition of research is partially taken from the REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions, Jan 2019 (Document REF 2019/01) as amended in October 2020, available at: www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/

² By implication, contract and consultancy research that is subject to a confidentiality statement and which cannot, therefore, be "published, disseminated or made publicly available" does not come within our scope of research, although it could lead to a scholarly output that has an internal and/or external impact. However, it should be noted that a confidential report could form part of an institution's REF 2021 submission provided a quality and impact assessment can be undertaken. This would require the confidentiality statement to be lifted to enable such assessment.

- Presenting a research paper at an internal Research Seminar, Widening Participation Forum or Annual Teaching and Learning Conference
- Presenting a research paper at an external conference
- Publishing a research paper in our Working Paper Series
- Publishing an article in a peer-reviewed journal
- Publishing a monograph
- Publishing teaching materials that embody original research
- Publishing other academic-related materials that embody original research
- Publishing professional services materials that embody original research

Scholarship is defined as activities which are undertaken to ensure academic staff have an up-to-date and current knowledge of their discipline, with appropriate breadth and depth to enable them to create high-quality learning experiences for students, and which of itself could lead to other outputs that have internal and/or external impact. It includes, *inter alia*:

- Responding to developments within the discipline to ensure the curriculum remains current
- Reflecting critically on teaching performance, making improvements to its practice and engaging with pedagogical issues
- Keeping up-to-date with the use of learning technology
- Undertaking personal research (to include undertaking a doctoral degree)
- Attending internal forums (e.g. Research Seminars; Widening Participation Forum; Teaching and Learning Forum)
- Attending our Annual Teaching and Learning Conference
- Attending external conferences
- Writing student textbooks
- Publishing short articles in professional journals
- Development of case studies

2.2 Impact

We do not seek to enter into research without a purpose. The purpose of our research is that all outputs will have a considerable internal and/or external impact in terms of their reach and significance. As stated above, scholarship itself could lead to outputs that have internal and/or external impact.

Internal impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to:

- Students
- Teaching

- Curriculum and programme development
- Other activities

External impact³ is defined as a national and/or international effect on, change or benefit to:

- The economy
- Society
- Culture
- Public policy or services
- Health
- The environment
- Quality of life
- The higher education sector (including students, teaching, curriculum and programme development, and other activities) where the impact extends beyond our Institute

2.3 Research environment

Through this Research Strategy we will create a research environment⁴ that is defined as one that is conducive to producing high-quality research and enabling considerable impact, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.

3. Research Goals

Our Research Goals and Objectives for the Research Strategy 2021-24 are:

1. Develop, support and empower all our staff to achieve excellence in research that has considerable internal and/or external impact, reflected through direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, and society; to the public and voluntary sectors; and also to ourselves.
2. Design and deliver courses that are informed by research, and through which we will develop and empower students to engage in their own research.
3. Monitor and enhance the quality of our research outputs, the internal and/or external impact of such outputs, and the vitality and sustainability of our research environment, and develop a submission in at least one Unit of Assessment for the post-2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Research Goal 1

Develop, support and empower all our staff to achieve excellence in research that has considerable internal and/or external impact, reflected through direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, and society; to the public and voluntary sectors; and also to ourselves.

³ This definition of external impact is partially taken from the REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions (see footnote 1).

⁴ This definition of research environment is partially taken from the REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions (see footnote 1).

We are committed to developing, supporting and empowering all our staff to achieve excellence in research that has considerable internal and/or external impact.

As stated at **Section 2.1** above, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, and society; to the public and voluntary sectors; and also to ourselves. It includes work that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs. As stated at **Section 2.2** above, the purpose of our research is that all outputs will have a considerable internal and/or external impact in terms of their reach and significance.

Research-active staff are categorised as new, junior, or senior researchers.

Researchers, regardless of their category (i.e. new, junior or senior), will work under an agreed Research Development Plan (RDP). This RDP is an overarching statement which is developed and agreed between the researcher, mentor (if applicable) and the RDP Coordinator.

The RDP provides the researcher with a clear direction and strategic approach towards undertaking agreed research activities and achieving agreed research outputs that will have a considerable internal and/or external impact in terms of reach and significance, to include what impact evidence will be collected and how such evidence will be evaluated to demonstrate impact (see **Section 2.2** above).

Mentors will assist new and junior researchers to formulate the RDP, which will include a staged output progression (e.g. internal Research Seminar presentation, external conference paper presentation, joint peer-reviewed publication, sole peer-reviewed publication, and contribution to our research environment).

The RDP will set out the development and support available to each researcher. This development and support includes:

- Allocation of a senior researcher to act as mentor for new and junior researchers
- Internal Research Forum
- Internal Research Seminars
- Internal Widening Participation Forum
- Internal Annual Teaching and Learning Conference
- Internal Working Paper Series
- Individual annual research allowance for external research and scholarly activities as follows:
 - £1,000 for a permanent member of staff with an approved RDP
 - £1,000 for a sessional lecturer with an approved RDP, who is teaching an average of 12 hours or more per week over semesters 1 and 2
 - £500 for a sessional lecturer with an approved RDP, who is teaching an average of 6 to 11 hours per week over semesters 1 and 2
- A payment of £1,500 for delivering all the research outputs as set out within the approved RDP for a specific academic year, all staff (permanent or sessional) being eligible for such payment
- Research leave for permanent members of staff based upon tangible research outputs that have considerable internal and/or external impact, and contribution to our research environment

- Scholarship to cover tuition/registration fees for completing a PhD by publication at any higher education provider with Research Degree Awarding Powers that is based within the UK, in addition to the annual research allowance

As stated at **Section 2.1** above, research includes work that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, for example:

- Presenting a research paper at an internal Research Seminar, Widening Participation Forum, or Annual Teaching and Learning Conference
- Presenting a research paper at an external conference
- Publishing a research paper in our Working Paper Series
- Publishing an article in a peer-reviewed journal
- Publishing a monograph
- Publishing teaching materials that embody original research
- Publishing other academic-related materials that embody original research
- Publishing professional services materials that embody original research

All researchers are expected to contribute to the ongoing development of our research environment; an environment that is conducive to producing high-quality research and enabling considerable impact, in terms of its vitality and sustainability (see **Section 2.3** above).

We expect that our researchers will carry out their research to the highest ethical standards, while respecting the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech. Regulation 3 of our Articles of Association provides that we will:

- Respect the principle of academic freedom, subject to compliance with the Institute's equality, diversity and inclusion policies and procedures, and subject to compliance with any legislative or regulatory requirements
- Respect the principle of freedom of speech for all students enrolled on a course delivered by the Institute, members of the Bloomsbury Institute Student Guild, staff employed by the Institute, external speakers, the directors and the shareholders, subject to compliance with the Institute's equality, diversity and inclusion policies and procedures, and subject to compliance with any legislative or regulatory requirements.

Our **Research Ethics Approval Procedures** (that are set out within our **Research Ethics Code of Practice**) set out how we achieve this.

Objectives (Research Goal 1)

- Provide all staff (academic and professional services) with the opportunity to engage in research that will have a considerable internal and/or external impact, and that will be of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, and society; to the public and voluntary sectors; and also to ourselves.
- Ensure all staff who engage in research, work under an agreed Research Development Plan (RDP) that will record the agreed research outputs over a three-year period, the intended internal and/or external impact of such research in terms of its reach and significance, the impact evidence that will be collected and how such evidence will be evaluated to demonstrate impact, and the support to be provided.

- Ensure all staff who engage in research are categorised as new, junior or senior and provide appropriate support and development depending upon the category, to include:
 - Allocation of a senior researcher to act as mentor for new and junior researchers
 - Internal Research Forum
 - Internal Research Seminars
 - Internal Widening Participation Forum
 - Internal Annual Teaching and Learning Conference
 - Internal Working Paper Series
 - Individual annual research allowance for external research and scholarly activities as follows:
 - £1,000 for a permanent member of staff with an approved RDP
 - £1,000 for a sessional lecturer with an approved RDP, who is teaching an average of 12 hours or more per week over semesters 1 and 2
 - £500 for a sessional lecturer with an approved RDP, who is teaching an average of 6 to 11 hours per week over semesters 1 and 2
 - A payment of £1,500 for delivering all the research outputs as set out within the approved RDP for a specific academic year, all staff (permanent or sessional) being eligible for such payment
 - Research leave for permanent members of staff based upon tangible research outputs that have considerable internal and/or external impact; and contribution to our research environment
 - Scholarship to cover tuition/registration fees for completing a PhD by publication at any higher education provider with Research Degree Awarding Powers that is based within the UK, in addition to the annual research allowance
- Ensure staff who engage in research contribute to the ongoing development of our research environment.
- Ensure staff who engage in research carry out their research to the highest ethical standards.

Research Goal 2

Design and deliver courses that are informed by research, and develop and empower students to engage in their own research.

This Goal takes into account the UK Quality Code for Higher Education core practice that we have sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

We currently design and deliver our own undergraduate degrees that are validated by the University of Northampton. We are approved to deliver postgraduate degrees that are franchised by the University of Northampton [although we are not currently delivering postgraduate degrees].

We develop, support and empower our staff to undertake, *inter alia*, discipline-based and pedagogic-based research that will enhance the students' educational experience.

This research informs:

- The design and delivery of our validated undergraduate degrees.
- The delivery of our franchised postgraduate degrees.

With the exclusion of practice-based modules, we aim to ensure that:

- Level 6 modules (on our validated undergraduate degrees) are designed and taught by researchers.
- Level 7 modules (on our franchised postgraduate degrees) are taught by researchers.

All undergraduate and postgraduate degrees include a research-based module that is designed to develop and empower students to engage in their own research.

We have made an application for our own Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). Once TDAP is conferred, we will be responsible for designing and delivering our own degrees. The above principles will be applied to the design and delivery of our own degrees.

Objectives (Research Goal 2)

- Ensure that research informs the design and delivery of our validated undergraduate degrees, and the design and delivery of our own undergraduate degrees once TDAP is conferred.
- Ensure research informs the delivery of our franchised postgraduate degrees, and the design and delivery of our own postgraduate degrees once TDAP is conferred.
- With the exclusion of practice-based modules, aim to ensure that Level 6 modules are designed and taught by researchers.
- With the exclusion of practice-based modules, aim to ensure that Level 7 modules are taught by researchers.
- Ensure that all undergraduate and postgraduate degrees include a research-based module that is designed to develop and empower students to engage in their own research.

Research Goal 3

Monitor and enhance the quality of our research outputs, the internal and/or external impact of such outputs, and the vitality and sustainability of our research environment, and develop a submission in at least one Unit of Assessment for the post-2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

This Goal takes into account the Guidance on Submissions for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

Goal 1 above provides that researchers, regardless of their category (i.e. new, junior or senior), will work under an agreed Research Development Plan (RDP). The RDP is an overarching statement which is developed and agreed between the researcher, mentor (if applicable) and RDP Coordinator.

The RDP provides the researcher with a clear direction and strategic approach towards undertaking agreed research activities and achieving agreed research outputs that will have a considerable internal and/or external impact in terms of reach and significance, to include the impact evidence that will be collected and how such evidence will be evaluated to demonstrate impact (see **Section 2.2** above).

Research outputs

Our aim is to develop a submission in at least one Unit of Assessment for the post-21 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

We will monitor the quality of research outputs. The criteria for assessing the quality of outputs are originality, significance and rigour. A research output will be graded as follows:

- Four Star: Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
- Three Star: Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour, but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
- Two Star: Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
- One Star: Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
- Unclassified: Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work.

Through this monitoring of the quality of research outputs, we will provide more targeted support for staff to enhance the quality of their outputs.

Such monitoring will also provide the basis for selecting the research outputs that will be included in our submission for the post-21 REF.

Impact

When we make a submission to the post-2021 REF, an assessment will be made of the impact of our research in terms of reach and significance.

With regards to the individual impact of research outputs, research-active staff will articulate within the RDP the impact evidence that will be collected and how such evidence will be evaluated to demonstrate impact.

Through the development of our submission to the post-2021 REF, we will develop two case studies to highlight the internal and/or external impact of our research in terms of reach and significance (see **Section 2.2** above), as opposed to the impact of individual research outputs.

The following impacts will be applied:

- Academic impact: The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory, application and academic practice.
- Bloomsbury Institute specific impact: The demonstrable contribution that research makes to areas such as student support/experience, teaching and learning practice, and policy and procedures at Bloomsbury Institute.
- Wider impact: An effect on, change to, or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment, quality of life, or the higher education sector (including students, teaching and other activities).

Examples of impact will be underpinned by excellent research. The underpinning research will be deemed to be excellent if it has been assessed as being a minimum of Two Stars, i.e. the underpinning research is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

Evidence of impact will be provided as follows:

- Audit evidence: Corroborating information that underpins the truth of the claims being made in the case study, for audit purposes.
- Assessment evidence: Information and indicators in the case study that will enable an overall judgment to be made about the reach and significance of the impacts described.

In assessing the impact described within a case study, an overall judgement will be made about its reach and significance as a whole, rather than separately. Impact will be graded as follows:

- Four Star: Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
- Three Star: Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
- Two Star: Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
- One Star: Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
- Unclassified: The impact is of little or no reach and significance.

Research environment

When we make a submission to the post-2021 REF, an assessment will be made of the quality of our research environment in terms of vitality and sustainability.

Through the development of our submission to the post-2021 REF, we will undertake an assessment of our research environment that may include:

- Research and knowledge, engagement and impact strategy.
- Innovative interdisciplinary research initiatives and participation in major regional, national or international research collaborations with other academic and non-academic partners.
- Contribution to the wider academic community such as journal editing, conference convening, working for learned societies and peer review, as well as other indicators of recognition and contribution.
- Contribution to the wider non-academic community through engagement and impact-related activities, including membership of major policy committees or industry partnerships.
- Provision of research facilities and research support.
- Research grant income.

Our research environment will be assessed in terms of its vitality and sustainability. It will be graded as follows:

- Four Star: An environment that is conducive to producing research of world-leading quality and enabling outstanding impact, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.
- Three Star: An environment that is conducive to producing research of internationally excellent quality and enabling very considerable impact, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.
- Two Star: An environment that is conducive to producing research of internationally recognised quality and enabling considerable impact, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.

- One Star: An environment that is conducive to producing research of nationally recognised quality and enabling recognised but modest impact, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.
- Unclassified: An environment that is not conducive to producing research of nationally recognised quality or enabling impact of reach and significance.

Objectives (Research Goal 3)

- Continue to retain a central record of research outputs for all research-active staff.
- Ensure, wherever possible, that research outputs are made available in open access form in accordance with the RCUK Open Access Policy⁵.
- Monitor the quality of individual research outputs, and support staff to enhance the quality of their outputs.
- Develop two case studies to highlight the internal and/or external impact of our research in terms of reach and significance, as opposed to the impact of individual research outputs.
- Undertake an internal assessment of our research environment in terms of its vitality and sustainability.

4. Related regulations, policies and procedures

4.1 Internal

- Articles of Association
- Strategic Framework 2021-24
- Bloomsbury Institute Conference Papers
- Bloomsbury Institute Research Seminars
- Bloomsbury Institute Working Paper Series
- Expression of Interest to become a Bloomsbury Institute Active Researcher
- Research Development Plan 2021-24
- Research Ethics Code of Practice 2021-22 [that incorporates the Research Ethics Approval Procedures]

4.2 External

- Guidance on Submissions, REF 2021
www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/
- RCUK Open Access Policy

⁵ Available at: www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/open-access/open-access-policy/

www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/open-access/open-access-policy/

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education

www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

5. Review of the Research Strategy 2021-24

This Research Strategy 2021-24 will be reviewed annually by our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). Any amendments will be subject to approval by the Academic Committee.