

University of Gloucestershire

Research Strategy

1. Introduction

Research activity is fundamental to the identity of Higher Education. The University faces the challenge of providing a high-quality research-informed curriculum built upon knowledge creation and application with impact on the outside world. Our research students also expect a high-quality research environment, consistent with our research degree awarding powers.

We are a learning-led University that sees it as integral to our mission that we develop excellence in research and practice in selected fields, and seek peer recognition through the Research Excellence Framework. We will therefore invest, on a selective basis, in areas of research excellence that align with our subject strengths and strategic priorities.

The University has to date operated variable practices in relation to research activity and locally determined approaches to research time allocation. Our future research planning will be based on a consistent approach aligning research activities with strategic priorities and Faculty Business Plans.

We invest 12% of academic staff costs in research and scholarly activity. The baseline 185 hours of each academic's time will be fully supported to enhance the student experience and benefit our strategic aims with regard to reputation, doctoral education, income generation, external engagement, and scholarly activity underpinning teaching. For exercises such as the Research Excellence Framework, and in pursuit of our mission as a university, we will further invest in excellent research areas, together with areas demonstrating potential for research excellence, in the best interests of a learning-led university.

Our guiding principles will be a transparent approach to resource allocation and to the reporting of research activity. Research costs can be highly variable across the University when measured by student or by staff member, such that we need to align approaches to investment across the University and target resource at priority areas.

Consonant with the intentions of the new Strategic Plan research will link strongly to teaching, support business development, enhance the University's profile, and be relevant to our mission and our subject base.

In the University Strategic Plan 2012-17, our priority goal for research is: *To embed research, scholarship, practice and consultancy in all our activities.*

To achieve this goal, we will pursue the following actions:

- Ensure that all courses are informed by a combination of scholarship, research, and professional practice.

- Provide all teaching staff with opportunities to identify and pursue through appropriate means their ambitions for research, or professional practice, or consultancy, as well as ensuring all teaching staff pursue scholarship in their subject.
- Develop a successful submission to the Research Excellence Framework.
- Identify which research areas the University should prioritize for investment with a view to achieving excellence. We will apply a transparent approach to decision making for research support, based on cost-value analysis.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage with research at undergraduate as well as postgraduate level.
- Invest in the postgraduate research community and develop its ethos for the benefit of students, supervisors and other researchers.

We will measure our progress using the following indicators:

- Performance in the Research Excellence Framework 2014 by those research units selected for entry
- Level of research and consultancy income
- Level of postgraduate research (PGR) student recruitment
- PGR student completion rates
- Satisfaction of PGR students, as measured by the Postgraduate research experience survey

2. Types of Research

The University pursues and supports four types of research activity, listed below with associated income sources.

<u>Type of Research Activity</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Principal income source</u>
Postgraduate research	the supervision and training of postgraduate research students	Course fees and QR grant (Research Degree Programme funds)
Research and Scholarship	activity to support subject knowledge and pedagogy, professional practice, and the development of research-informed teaching	(a) Teaching grant -- 185 hours research and scholarly activity time (b) Any additional time to be funded from Faculty investment against priorities identified in Business Plans
Income generating research	commissioned or user-defined work for external agencies	Funding agency - Quantified through PIMS
REF preparation (Research Excellence Framework assessment exercise)	research towards internationally excellent (3*) submissible outputs / impact	HEFCE Quality-Related (QR) grant

3. Coordination with University Plans

Within the wider range of strategies and approaches under the University Strategic Plan, this strategy sits alongside the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and supports, among others, the emerging Business Development Strategy.

The University's Teaching and Learning Strategy has 'Research/practice informed teaching' as one of its main priorities. Other priorities for research-and-teaching profiles are the scholarship of teaching and learning, student employability, research degree study, and capacity building in research supervision and examination. These are supported in Faculties through time for both postgraduate research support and for research and scholarly activity.

Each Faculty has a designated Business Development lead to work in concert with the Business Development Director and coordinate with Faculty leads on research, particularly over the interaction between income-generating research and business development.

Individual research goals, outputs and achievements will be discussed and recorded through SDR processes. Any enhanced research time above R&SA will be set against agreed targets.

The University will work towards the maintenance of a central register of research activity as part of a CRIS (Central Research Information System). CRIS will be scoped with advice from Learning and Information Services and ICT Services, in part to establish the potential for a repository for the storing and access of research outputs and possibly for Web Content Management purposes.

Our priorities here are to:

- Monitor and promote research and scholarship to enhance the student experience
- Support income-generating research in line with Faculty objectives aligned with University strategic priorities
- Ensure research targets set through the SDR are in line with Faculty Business Plans
- Ensure an actively managed central register of research activity

4. Research Categories

In addition to work on postgraduate degree programmes, research falls into one of the following three categories:

- Research and Scholarly Activity
- Externally funded research (inc. QR funds)
- Faculty-funded Research

Research and Scholarly Activity (R&SA). To the benefit of teaching and learning, all academic staff engage in research and scholarly activity, for which 185 hours are allocated to each individual. This time is used to maintain current subject knowledge and enhance teaching

content and may also contribute to any of the other types of research activity identified in this document. The apportionment of this time to R&SA goals and the programme of activity are to be discussed with Line Managers as part of the SDR process and included in workload allocations. This time is usable for a range of scholarship and research related activity, which may lead to publication, income generation, knowledge transfer, or practice-based outcomes, and must normally also be shown to be linked to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

Externally funded research should cover direct costs and make a contribution above this, normally exceeding 20%. If an activity's research income does not meet its cost, for it to be authorized the level of shortfall must be agreed as strategic investment by the relevant Faculty in line with priorities in the Business Plan.

Additional Research Time. Staff may be allocated additional time funded from Faculty budgets to pursue specific research goals identified in Business Plans. Such time must be associated with a specific activity related to the Faculty Business Plan and will most commonly be allocated for either professional development in relation to the supervision of research students, REF returnable outcomes, projects with income-generating potential, or bidding activity.

Our priorities here are to:

- Invest in excellence consonant with University priorities
- Account for research time in workload setting on a transparent basis
- Ensure research that is not externally funded is selectively supported in alignment with Business Plans

5. Research Oversight and Development

Committees

To align with other University structures, Research Development Groups will become Research Committees with broad and representative membership at University and Faculty levels. University and Faculty Research Degrees Committees will become subcommittees that report into the Research Committees.

Institutional oversight of University research strategy implementation will rest with the University Research Committee, which will include Faculty Research leads, the Director of Teaching and Learning Innovation, the Head of the Postgraduate Research Centre and researchers from all Faculties. Faculty oversight of research and research degree development will rest with research leads who will support the Dean in shaping and implementing relevant sections of Faculty Business Plans in line with University strategic priorities.

Professors and Readers

These are leadership roles important to research and development activity within the University and require alignment of appointments with University strategic priorities and Faculty needs. All professors and readers should maintain a continuing record in leadership and internal contribution. Additionally, dependent on Faculty plans and University priorities, readers and professors will be allocated accountable time within the SDR process for one or more of the following activities:

- Bid writing, grant applications, and the generation of sustained research and consultancy income which contributes to strategic objectives and to funding available to the University
- Mentoring of colleagues and development of subject area (e.g. research career planning; joint-publications; development of research-informed-teaching profiles; REF preparation and co-ordination)
- Publications in refereed journals and production of scholarly works; prestigious seminar and conference participation and organization
- A leadership role in the supervision and recruitment of postgraduate research students or the development of their programmes
- Achievement with regard to professional practice and standing; achievement in knowledge exchange and research commercialization, or research Impact outside of Higher Education

Research Centres

An annual review of Research Centres will be conducted at University level, with input from Faculty leads for research and Heads of School. Considerations of research excellence, critical mass, funding and support will underpin the endorsement and promotion of continued Research Centre activity year-on-year in line with University priorities and Faculty Business Plans.

Postgraduate Research

Research Degrees Subcommittees will have oversight of research student programmes and progression, including the award of research degrees and alignment with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education. University Research Degrees Subcommittee will also monitor on an annual basis aspects of performance and provision on postgraduate research programmes as well as Postgraduate Research Experience Survey results together with University and Faculty action plans. Recommendations for development and matters for consideration that exceed the remit of the subcommittee will be flagged for Research Committee, which will seek appropriate action through University systems.

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Initial planning of Units with a potential 3* profile for submission to REF 2014 has commenced and will continue through 2012. Profile will be principally gauged by analysis of outputs (with external peer review). Other considerations will be PGR numbers, income, critical mass, and Unit coherence. Final decisions on Units for submission are scheduled to be made by Executive in December 2012. Our guiding principles are:

- Only submit in areas where standing is, or can be, at required strength
- Seek to maximize reputational benefit and league table performance
- Entered Units to be derived from critical mass and strategy, not subject disciplines

6. Research Investment

Drawing on the definitions of research activity outlined in this document, the University will progress its agenda to embed research, scholarship, and practice in all our activities. As an ongoing part of this commitment, all areas are supported to pursue scholarship and research informed teaching. This is in concert with the fourth priority in the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy (2011-15):

'Research/practice informed learning and teaching

- Curriculum content is informed by contemporary research and practice.
- Students develop skills for research and resource investigation
- Students produce as well as consume knowledge'

Additionally, our priorities will be to build excellence and reputation in research activity in proven areas of strength, such that:

- The University's high-quality applied areas are supported to pursue research, knowledge exchange, and consultancy work that is income generating and impactful in terms of policy, reputation, and profile.
- Areas that are better placed to pursue high-quality curiosity-driven research are supported to pursue REF development and societal, creative, and cultural impact.
- Professional areas are supported to pursue accreditation and the development of staff research capacity appropriate to the delivery of successful professional courses, including doctoral programmes.

Investment of quality-related monies will be at University and Faculty level. *University level Investment* will be made to build excellence in selected areas based upon alignment with strategic goals alongside evidence of the achievement or real potential for research excellence in terms of research environment, impact, and capacity, including fit with external factors (economic, social, and cultural, including regional business and Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership).

We will primarily invest to pursue excellent research in a small number of areas that show

- i. Alignment with the University's Strategic Priorities
- ii. Consonance with the University's Research Strategy and the relevant Faculty Business Plan
- iii. Strength in medium-term potential and long-term viability with regard to the research environment (e.g. research students, research income) and the wider

educational context (FTE of staff, undergraduate and postgraduate taught recruitment levels)

- iv. Potential for excellence as measured by the REF and other benchmarking indicators: 1. Research output since 1st Jan 2008; 2. Research income since 1st Jan 2008; 3. Research degree completions since 1st Jan 2008; 4. Research degree registrations (current numbers and trajectory); 5. Previous RAE performance and income; 6. Researcher Critical Mass.

Faculty Level Investment of devolved quality-related (QR) or other funds will support research development in line with University and Faculty priorities. This support will be apportioned through Faculty Executive decisions based on Business Plans and via Research Committee recommendations using agreed principles and criteria (e.g. see Appendix)

All investment for support will be reported to the University Research Committee alongside the research element of Faculty Business plans.

Professor Peter Childs, Dean of Research, March 2012