**BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY**

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**Bishop Grosseteste University**

**Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy**

1. **Introduction**

The University achieved a very creditable result in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment. Given the changing institutional and national context, it must adapt to advance from this in the next five years and beyond. Currently the institutional research strategy is framed as a set of objectives in the 2014-19 Strategic Plan. This strategy recognises that research planning must be longer-term and extend beyond this time horizon to address, for example, the external assessments of the REF and Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP).

This document replaces the previous Research Strategy Implementation Plan. This reflects that the research policy and funding environment is both complex and continually changing. For this reason, this strategy will be reviewed annually by the Research Committee and will be accompanied by an annual Research business plan.

The scope of the strategy covers the research, innovation and knowledge exchange plans and activities of the University, including the Schools, Research Centre, Research Clusters, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange activities. The Research Committee will exercise academic governance over the Research strategy, reporting to Academic Enhancement Committee. Groups for Research Ethics, Doctoral Programmes, Research Students and REF preparation report to the Research Committee.

1. **Overall approach to research development**

The University’s approach to research development will be guided by the following considerations.

Research within a small institution can develop most effectively by making multiple connections with external and institutional agendas, as an open and inclusive process of creating and sharing knowledge, rather than being a self-contained and ‘closed’ activity. Externally these connections include regional economic, educational, enterprise and community development and consideration of the potential implications of devolution via engagement with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP); partnerships with a range of organisations; sectoral and professional development. Internally, research must connect effectively with agendas for teaching excellence, innovation and knowledge transfer, enterprise, employability, community and stakeholder engagement, and internationalisation. It is via these multiple connections and networks that the applications of research through Knowledge Exchange and Innovation thrive.

At the heart of the Research and Knowledge Exchange (R&KE) strategy is the development of a vibrant and inclusive research-oriented community at Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU). External assessments such as REF and RDAP are important milestones for the research strategy, although they should not define it. However it is very clear that expectations of research funding income growth, and innovative applications of research which demonstrate measurable research and broader societal impact, will become increasingly significant in policy terms.

Research at BGU must be valued as an organic and integral aspect of the University’s culture and development. Organisation and systems are enablers to developing this research community with a distinct culture, values and productivity. A facilitating approach to leadership; time and space for research development and social events; reasonable budget support with an enterprising approach to winning external resources; an inclusive and pervasive approach to connecting internal and external relationships; and clear expectations for researchers of generating and publishing results of high quality and impact, should all be features of this. Research student and staff development, through training, seminars, effective mentoring and other processes, are essential enablers in encouraging research work.

Research development must also address institutional constraints which have had adverse effects, and which include a track record of slippage against plans and targets; inadequate systems and infrastructure; some cultural bias against research; missing external opportunities; and unproductive use of available resources, including time.

In line with this approach, the following are immediate priority areas which are being addressed in 2016, and are included in this strategy:

1. Defining and implementing the R&KE structure, as shown in outline below.
2. Creating essential research support systems to enable growth in activity and income.
3. Planning to meet the anticipated requirements of the next REF.
4. Making significant headway on research student supervision capacity and enrolment.

The following sections of this strategy address:

3 - Research organisation: Research and Innovation Centre;

4 - Support systems for research and innovation;

5 - Research leadership and staff development;

6 - Doctoral students and research degree awarding powers;

7 - Research clusters;

8 - Research data;

9 - Research exchange and communications;

10 - REF submission;

11 - External income development.

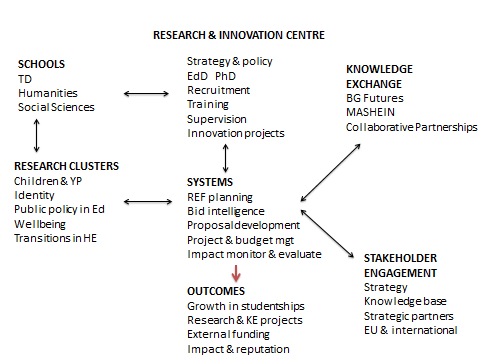
1. **Research organisation: Research and Innovation Centre**

The research organisation is proposed as a Research and Innovation Centre (RIC) which connects with the three academic Schools via a group of five Research Clusters.

The logic for a Research and Innovation Centre is partly that, at European and national policy levels, the generation of knowledge through HE research and its external application through Knowledge Exchange and Innovation are viewed as interdependent processes. This is recognised in funding systems (e.g. European Structural and Investment Funds) which BGU will more readily be able to access through an integrated centre. The current Innovation unit has valuable expertise in running academically-related but generally non-research projects, such as the Sandford Awards, and short courses for knowledge exchange. This unit has the ability to add greater value by engaging staff and students with a broader conception of Research and Innovation which engages with external policy, industry and sectoral networks, and which can attract external funding.

The RIC will in addition be responsible for institutional strategy, policy and support systems for research and innovation. It will host the PhD and EdD doctoral programmes and fulfil the functions commonly associated with a Graduate School in a larger institution. This will include contributing to the development and provision of research training for undergraduate degrees and for postgraduate M-level taught and research programmes.

The Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) structure shows the Research and Innovation Centre functions and relationships, in which the Research Clusters provide the activity base to support and develop thematic and discipline-based research.



The ambition is to create an externally oriented Research and Innovation Centre by 2018 which will engage students with partner organisations in innovative activities and projects. This is the subject of an external funding bid.

1. **Support systems for research and innovation**

The RIC will develop and run the essential support systems required to implement and evidence the strategy, and to enable growth in activity and income. These systems should be lean, agile and supportive but also provide necessary controls, safeguards and evidence. They will include:

* Intelligence gathering and sharing to inform research project and funding opportunity identification, based on Research Professional subscription];
* Research and project proposal development, financial planning and control;
* Project management of delivery and financial control;
* Evaluation and tracking of project outputs, outcomes and impact;
* Effective staff research time allocation, accountability and management of results;
* REF submission development and evidencing;
* Research ethical approval to meet external legal, professional and funding requirements .

An additional staffing resource will be required to establish this research infrastructure. Approval to appoint to a new research-related RIC Co-ordinator post will be sought in Spring 2016. This will enable the required systems will be developed and implemented by September 2016.

**5. Research leadership and staff development**

It is essential to BGU’s future success in research and knowledge exchange activity that it is able to attract, develop, retain and recognise the contributions of research-active academic and professional staff in order to create and sustain a healthy research culture. The development of research leaders, who are recognised as ‘knowledge champions’, is vital. Academic appointments should be made of research-active staff with doctoral qualifications wherever possible. Research progression pathways will be featured in an institutional staff career development policy to be implemented in 2016-17. This will address career development and recognition opportunities for research-active staff, including Academic Co-ordinators of Doctoral programmes; Research cluster leads; and staff who can meet the criteria for promotion to Reader and Professor.

1. **Doctoral students and research degree awarding powers**

BGU is committed to developing its doctoral programmes and in time to meeting the rigorous requirements for Research Degree Awarding Powers.

It is essential to demonstrate significant progress with doctoral student recruitment and progression, with completions where possible, prior to the review in 2017 by University of Leicester and BGU of the current partnership agreement. Failure by BGU to demonstrate significant progress places this relationship, renewal of the partnership agreement, and the goal of RDAP, at severe risk.

Both the PhD and EdD programmes will be developed and promoted to their respective markets. The EdD is primarily for part-time experienced professionals working in education-related jobs, primarily but not exclusively, in schools, FE and HE in the UK who prefer to study with a cohort in a structured and collaborative way. PhD students are more research-intensive and may be in any discipline where there is supervisory capability and capacity. PhD students will increasingly be international.

An effective marketing and recruitment process must be developed to create a growing and vibrant community of 40 plus research students registered, who, as they complete, will be able to generate the 30 plus completions required to gain RDAP.

A phased and realistic growth plan in supervisory capacity, capability and enrolled students is also required. Both of these areas currently have serious deficiencies. BGU is committed to supporting PhD (and potentially EdD) studentships. Up to six PhD research studentships are proposed to start in 2016 and a further 6 research studentships are proposed for each academic year 2016-17; 17-18; 18-19; 19-20. These total 30 studentships. In addition, there will be BGU staff as part-time doctoral students and fee-paying UK, European and international doctoral students. The EdD will recruit at least biennially in 2016, 2018 and 2020, or annually if capacity and demand allow.

In 2015-16, BGU had 18 active doctoral students (14 EdD, 4 PhD) and one completion. The aim is to recruit between 30-40 further research students in the period up to 2020, the main limiting factor being the increase in supervisory capacity that is required. Allowing for drop-outs, extensions in study time and failures or major revisions, a community of 40+ research students by 2020 should enable the goal of 30+ completions to be achieved in the 2022-2024 period.

To achieve this will require continued investment, not only in studentships and in supervisory capacity in staffing, but also in dedicated study space accommodation, research facilities and support for the doctoral programmes.

1. **Research clusters**

The purpose of research clusters is to create self-managing communities in which academic and professional staff who are, or aspire to, be research-active can develop, exchange and promote their research interests. All research-active staff will be expected to be a member of, and to engage with, the activities of their chosen cluster. Each cluster is broad in scope within an overall theme which provides an externally recognisable identity and enables a critical mass of researchers to participate.

Clusters will be expected to meet regularly and to share a programme of activities, which may include guest speakers, members presenting working papers, visits and other activities. They will also be encouraged to support their members in developing research publications, grant project proposals, and external collaborations. Each cluster will have a leader/co-ordinator role, which provides an opportunity for research-related staff development. Clusters will be encouraged to seek University and external resources.

As clusters develop in effectiveness they will play important roles in hosting research students at postgraduate and doctoral levels (PT and FT), projects and activities, including research seminars and conferences. Clusters may, over time, develop spin-off interest groups or become specific research centres. The proposed criteria for a Centre (which other University centres will also need to meet) are:

* An identified leader or leadership team
* Substantive membership and sustained activities
* A business plan with a three-year forward projection
* External research (or in the case of teaching and learning, pedagogical) esteem and recognition at national and international level
* A track record of external funding generation (at least £40k/year)

1. **Research data**

Most research at BGU has tended to use small-scale, primary research datasets. The research landscape in all subject areas is changing rapidly with the ability to access and use large datasets. This is strongly encouraged by Government, Research Councils and other funders. Not using these can limit the scale, applicability and funding potential of research outputs. Research areas new to BGU, including Health and Social Care, require the ability to access and use large datasets. There is a long-term international movement to grant Open Access to all publicly funded research, datasets and archival data. There are also big (non-public) datasets to which researchers may have privileged access.

BGU needs to develop its ability to access, use and share large open datasets as a routine part of research, innovation and other work, including education and data-driven policymaking. This provides potential opportunities for partnership with the Lincolnshire Research Observatory (LRO) and other organisations to increase the use of Open datasets for research and innovation in public policy, education, health and business. Open research and innovation enable collaborative efforts to advance scientific knowledge and innovation for public good as well as for business benefit. BGU will review and update its policy on retention and storage of research data, as required by Funding bodies.

1. **Research exchange and communications**

BGU has responded to the Open Access requirement by initiating the BG Research Online repository, to be jointly administered by Library Services and the RIC. This will be used to make all research outputs expected to be submitted for the next REF assessment publicly available. It may also be used to make previous research outputs from staff, datasets and other useful resources, publicly available. Training will be given and staff required to use BG Research Online.

More effective internal and external communications are required for R&KE activity. These include:

* Research and Innovation webpages to be revised and updated;
* Wordpress-based weblogs to be set up for user-generated content and updates from each Research Cluster and RIC, including a single programme of research and related events;
* Regular online research news updates to be publicly available;
* Twice-yearly Research Forum events;
* Effective social media use.

1. **REF assessment**

BGU performed very well in the 2014 REF with 3 and 4\* ratings for Education, English and History Units of Assessment (UoA). There is an expectation to retain this rating, and to enter more UoAs, including Psychology and/or Health, and possibly others. The policy framework is changing and with consultation on the next REF taking place during 2016, the requirements will not be known until later in the year with a longer timescale likely for a future REF, possibly in 2021-2. It is anticipated that data metrics will play an increased part in this.

BGU will monitor the external developments and analyse the policy consultation document for greater clarity on the future REF requirements. We will work on the assumption that submissions of internationally excellent research, supported by evidence of impact, citations and research income for relevant UoAs, will be made. The process will start with a research audit of each of the three Schools in Spring 2016. Initial REF planning and the audits will centre on the following:

* Research strategy and policies
* Environment – strategy, evaluation of REF 2014, generating vitality and sustainability in research culture, infrastructure and facilities
* People – staffing strategy and people development; selection for REF inclusion and independent appeals process
* Staff registered on doctorates at BGU – supervision, progression and completions
* Impact – tracking and case study development
* Units of Assessment – identifying in which UoAs BGU will have the critical mass and output quality to score highly
* Research outputs – review and inclusion in BG Research Online
* Data metrics of output citations
* Research income tracking

A REF task group to co-ordinate planning and preparation will be set up when the requirements are known, reporting to the Research Committee. This will represent each likely Unit of Assessment. It will require systems to be created and the development of a knowledge base as described above. Metrics for staff research activity, income, and outputs will be established. The eventual REF submission will be likely to address both the REF and RDAP requirements

**11. External income development**

BGU needs to achieve significant growth in research and related funding which will build capacity, fund projects and enhance reputation and impact. BGU significantly trails comparator HEIs in external income, and evidence of impact. Effective use of a research funding system, with Research Professional actively used to identify opportunities will be required. Staff will be encouraged to register for and use this. Effective means, in-house and externally for supporting bid development, including workshops, will be established with the Clusters. Expectations will be defined and increasing targets agreed for research and related funding growth from 2016 at institutional, School and cluster level.