

<p>Institution: The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 35 – Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts</p>
<p>a. Overview A college of the University of London, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Central) is a specialist institution of 72 (56.25FTE) academic staff. Its strategic direction in recent years has maintained its traditional closeness to industry, as a conservatoire, while now also seeing that relationship as a provocation to new sorts of academic research enquiry. This has created a new kind of institution, as described below</p>
<p>b. Research strategy The journey of a conservatoire into a researching HEI reached an important milestone with the recognition in RAE2008 that Central had developed into a distinctive hybrid institution, ‘a specialist HEI positioned, perhaps uniquely, with equally authoritative connections into academic and industry research.’ (RAE report 2008) The phase of research strategy that led here had conceived of Central’s potential as a hub, positioned equidistant between the university sector, professional practice and community users. Post-2008 the research unit was <u>structured</u> in more detail in order to consolidate, and support, areas of demonstrated strength. This structure is the Practitioner-Researcher Network: a set of seven interconnected ‘nodes’, where nodes consist of researchers engaged in cognate enquiries: 1. acting, movement, voice; 2. applied theatre; 3. concepts and contexts; 4. contemporary dramaturgies; 5. intermediality in performance; 6. music theatre and sound; 7. puppetry and object theatre. The Network emphasises practice as a form of research, promotes the model of scholar-artist and provides a flexible way of moving between nodes for collaboration and support.</p> <p>The Practitioner-Researcher Network is overseen by a Director of Research (DoR) whose specific project in the current period has been to build on Central’s historic strengths and ensure consolidation of a distinctive Practice as Research (PaR) methodology alongside established critical methods, text-based analyses and publications. This methodological emphasis <u>promotes dialogue</u> of varying and distinct sorts between practice-oriented scholarship, professional practice and historical and conceptual research. It is in effect a conjunction of practice and critique.</p> <p>The strategic aims set out in submission to RAE2008 were largely focussed on creating the conditions in which to grow a research culture: ‘expansion of Research Office and increased capacity for research grant bidding; extension of the Visiting Professor programme; growth of research groups’, all of which have been achieved. By 2010, when it launched its Research Centres (see below), the research culture was not only well established but had shown capacity for growth. This is evidenced both in the increased number of staff outputs formally submitted to REF and in the development of capacity for postgraduate supervision. In 2007, 13 staff (11.2fte) were submitted (23 % of total); in 2013, 29 staff (21.25fte) are submitted (40% of total). Postgraduate Research (PgR) student numbers have grown over six years from 12 to 40. With substantial postgraduate taught programmes, this constitutes the largest platform of specialist drama-related postgraduate provision in the UK.</p> <p>Building on what has been achieved since 2008, Central’s research strategy through to 2020 will <u>confirm and strengthen</u> its identity as a new kind of hybrid conservatoire-research institution. This is intended as an exemplary model which will benefit the discipline by demonstrating the new possibilities from flexible collaborations not only between different sorts of academic approach but also between academy and industry, leading to a greater range of disciplinary activity within the UK</p>

and beyond. The **strategy will be made concrete and sustainable** by the following **actions**: development of new research leaders; continued diversification of funding; further increase of the proportion of submitted staff; extension of community of post-docs; closer links of PhDs and industry through more Collaborative Doctorates; review of Research Centres; enhancement of data capture and management in relation to external engagement; specific provision of space for PaR within a new building. The Practitioner-Researcher Network will continue to be used as a mechanism to develop emergent researchers in a mutually supportive environment. Research income will be grown (commercial sponsorship as well as EU and other schemes). Extended links with industry will be fostered by Central Connects (the outreach department) working in partnership with the Research Office to promote consultancy, knowledge transfer and impact. The emphasis on **ensuring sustainability** means that in January 2014 there will be an analysis of the process, data and documents towards REF2014 in order to learn strategically from the auditing process as a way of beginning the two-year hand-over during which current senior staff will mentor and work with the new leaders.

Above all there's a commitment to continue the nurturing of something intangible... a sort of intellectual adventure. This is made evident in a constant stream of events, projects, speakers, partnerships. The culture inspires collaborative critical enquiry and curiosity as to where a network, performance, master-class might lead. An exploration into devising techniques for verbatim theatre turns into two productions which go to the Edinburgh Festival which lead to an open seminar at Edinburgh co-hosted with artists from Complicite; research into instrumentalist performance leads to a new composition and a conference, and then to a collaborative project with the Royal College of Music. This **intellectual adventure** is bound up in, and energises, Central's strategic aim to explore a new model of institution which can in turn enhance and extend what the UK discipline is. The energy keeps its momentum because of a management approach that does not overtly compel people to be research-active, but instead encourages initiative and experiment. The result is that most staff feel not only enabled, but excited, to become researchers. This is seen not only in an increase of submitted staff but in those others (another 15% or so) who have embarked on the research route with their first published outputs.. So, while we will maintain the usual elements of a research culture - seminars, lectures, colloquia; funding for conference attendance, sabbatical scheme, internal grants – we seek also to maintain the sense of enquiry, of intellectual adventure, the buzz, which characterises Central 2013 and provides the energy that underpins the construction of the new hybrid institution - and its intellectual pleasure.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

Central's institutional mission aims to 'develop practitioners and researchers who shape the future of theatre and performance across the UK and beyond'. To support this aim Central has significantly extended its physical and staffing infrastructure to build a distinctive HEI. While **recruitment of staff** must ensure the capacity for conservatoire delivery, staffing strategy aims to increase the proportion of research-active academics. Senior researchers work to support specialist practitioners in becoming practitioner-researchers. New research leaders are developed both through node and Research Centre leadership and through involvement in preparation for REF and planning towards 2020. Knowledge and experience of the wider research sector have been enhanced by the increase, from one to three, of Visiting Professors, plus a new Visiting Fellow. The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is implemented from induction onwards; all staff are given research time in their balance of duties, and research development is concretely supported by staff development funding of at least £450 per person per annum to allow activities such as conference attendance. Schemes for sabbatical leave and

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project grants are administered by the Research Office.

Allocations of financial support require activity reports. These feed into the onward modelling of the individual's development, based on benefits gained and new challenges, which is discussed in annual performance review. To help attain research objectives, **staff development** provides for a range of support and training. For practitioners who wish to undertake PhD research institutional funds may be used (if external) or fees waived (if internal). Informal support for individual development is offered by meetings of research nodes and seminar gatherings and by individual dialogues with DoR or specialist mentors (e.g. Profs. Bush-Bailey, Shepherd or White).

Supervision training is both bought in and delivered in-house (with Profs. Bush-Bailey, Mackey, Nelson, Shepherd and White, among others). Beyond support for conference attendance, individuals are helped to develop the interface between their research specialism and its wider applications through funding membership of organisations (such as IFTR, ASTR, ATHE, SAA and PSi). By these means the overall programme of staff development seeks to **foster emergent researchers**, to **strengthen established researchers**, to **build new leaders**, and to **maintain high levels of external engagement**.

Central has submitted six Early-career researchers (ECR). All have appropriate line managers with whom they discuss, and monitor, their support needs and access to staff development funds. Support also comes from their chosen research nodes and, where relevant, their course team. As with all those submitting to research assessment for the first time, there is extensive dialogue with, and support from, DoR, including introduction to journals and critical reading of draft material. Additional funds are available to buy in teaching cover in order to release time to facilitate completion of research outputs. The Research Office advises on grant-writing and funding protocols, and the status of ECR is explicitly noted in discussions of the sabbatical panel.

Sabbatical leave is available to all, including part-timers and those on fixed-term contracts and all categories of researchers have benefited. Application is agreed with the line-manager, approved by the Dean of Studies and decided by a panel. There is flexibility as to the time allocated with no limit on frequency; reports written on completion are received by Research and Ethics Committee. Since 2008 around four sabbaticals per year have been awarded, as opposed to just over one per year in the previous period.

Career progression is formally discussed with line managers. Central has a published pay and promotions policy, with clear grade descriptors that include recognition of both research productivity and impact. These grade descriptors are aligned with the criteria used by the Conferment of Academic Titles committee (CATC), on which sit two external adjudicators.

Post-docs: in this phase, Central has benefited from hosting a Marie Curie Intra European Fellow undertaking research on Intermedial productions of Shakespeare in Europe. Future Fellowships are being planned as part of the drive to increase EU opportunities and funding (noted above).

Equal opportunities: the college has a single equality scheme and an Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC), answerable to the Executive Management Group. Head of HR sits on EDC and CATC and ensures all appointments, from advertisement onwards, are informed by E&D considerations. The chair of EDC is on the REF steering group and the REF peer-review panel.

ii. Research students

Central now has a substantial postgraduate research culture where none existed before 2006. Applications have grown rapidly and an increase in research-active staff has enabled significant growth in **recruitment** to a current total of 40 students (5% of total student body). Nine PhDs have been awarded so far (of which four have been awarded since 12/13 HESA return). There are

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currently two AHRC collaborative doctorates with an intention that these increase together with development of other PgR-industry links. External funding is supplemented by a scheme of internal bursaries totalling just over £49,000, with a grant of £4000 per annum from the Beatrice Lillie estate specifically to support research into musical theatre and comedy.

Central is alert to the particular challenges of preparing PhD students for future employment, ensuring that the required **training** programme addresses not only methodologies and research training but also broader skills development as part of their career aspirations and preparation, with a new pedagogies unit towards PGCert. Individual training needs are reviewed annually and specific resources for practice are confirmed in an individual technical support agreement. An annual training allowance supports conference attendance and skills development. Students are required to present work to their peers on a regular basis and invited to act as facilitators for the taught postgraduates' conference to learn the skills of chairing. They are strongly encouraged to attend research seminars and meetings of the research nodes and Centres. Separate funding is available to give papers at international conferences (in the current period 19 at TaPRA, 5 at IFTR, 7 at PSi).

Every **supervision** has a written tutorial record, agreed between student and supervisor. All students complete annually a scheme of work, which maps their process and outcomes across the year and is revisited at formal six-monthly review points. Upgrade interviews are expected 12-18 months after enrolment. Reports from reviews are discussed at the regular supervisors' meeting and submitted for consideration by Research Degrees Committee (RDC) which has oversight of the entire programme. The supervisors' meeting offers opportunities for discussion and mutual support, mentoring advice and exchange of best practice.

PgR students have a **course committee** which reports into RDC through its own representative. RDC monitors and discusses contribution of PgR events to the School community. PgR students also have places on Research and Ethics Committee and Academic Board. By these means they contribute not only to the management of their own affairs but to wider institutional deliberations.

Students benefit from the **research culture** by being located in research nodes which provide a point of intellectual exchange between new and experienced researchers in a non-hierarchical setting. They, in turn, enrich that culture by organising student-led events: the annual postgraduate research conference in January (with international attendance) and, every autumn, *Collisions*, a PaR platform where research practice is presented and discussed. There is ongoing exchange and a shared conference with the 240 taught MA students. And, beyond any requirement, PgR students initiate and curate events such as the London Comedy Forum. As noted in a recent programme review (Jan. 2013) Central's PgR community is not only now established but also has sufficient critical mass, independence and dynamism to be mutually supportive.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

With the decline in Research Council resource Central has sought to diversify its sources of **research income**, including commissions from artistic organisations. Two main aims through to 2020 are to increase the range of funders and to explore the opportunities of Horizon 2020. Research awards for the period 2008-14 total **£1,536,907**, of which £888,081 from AHRC; European programmes £210,669; non-AHRC research support £182,441 and arts commissions £255,716. Funders include Arts Council England, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, GlaxoSmithKlein, Gulbenkian Foundation, Pfizer, Toshiba, Wellcome Trust, Young Vic Theatre. (Note that some of the funding comes from sources not reported in HESA returns, giving apparent disparity between

REF 4b and these figures.)

The foundational scholarly infrastructure lies in the Practitioner-Researcher Network. This is materially supported by Central's extensive professional-standard facilities (including a proscenium-arch theatre, three black-box studios, experimental lighting and sound studios, two dance studios, eight rehearsal rooms and six video-editing workstations). These resources have been maintained and enhanced in a building programme the next phase of which will build at least three new studios (and include space for media facilities). There is a significant specialist library on-site which is complemented by the vast resource of the University of London library (twenty minutes away) where staff and students have readers' rights. Research Office manages an online research repository moving towards Green level Open Access. This was developed in July 2010 and includes research metadata, abstracts, PhD theses, transcriptions of research events, documents of projects. In parallel to library provision there is a Technical Support Department, with ten staff specialised in all areas of theatre practice including media support. Infrastructural coherence to the links between Library, Technical Support and IT has been recently established by the creation of a new post of Director of Operations. This strategic management of scholarly infrastructure has supported organisation of international conferences and facilitated the relationship between practice-led research, documentation of the practice and its archiving in the repository. It thereby ensures and sustains Central's contribution to the discipline in PaR.

Organisational infrastructure is evidenced both in investment in estate, personnel and resources and in development of research nodes and Centres. In 2010 new funding supported the creation of the Research Centres, described in section e. In 2011 the **Research Office** (RO) was brought under the oversight of the Deputy Academic Registrar to facilitate links with other support and data-management departments. To enhance links between research and business activity, a new full-time Fellowship was created in Research and Enterprise. Building on this, an investment of £200k in 2012 allowed for appointment of a funding officer and expansion of the Visiting Professors and Fellows scheme. The appointments of Prof. Bush-Bailey, Prof. White and Dr. Harradine were designed in part to promote and support links with industry and documentation of practice.

Research is operationally supported by the work of **four departments**. The expansion of RO staffing in 2011-12 provided more operational support in bidding for funds, documentation of practice and curation of research events. RO liaises closely with three interlocked departments: Library, Technical Support and IT. Together these departments materially support research in all its modes, from text searches and library loans through to advice on professional-standard kit and techniques, provision of appropriate documentation and maintenance of the online research repository. The linking of these departments makes it easier to explore diverse research modes, sustaining rich multiplicity, while at the same time ensuring parity of resource between practice-led and text-based scholarship.

The strategy that ensures balance within the infrastructure, together with sustaining its capacity, is underpinned, and informed, by management structure. This is a direct consequence of Central's senior staff commitment to strengthening the research culture and supporting production of research outputs. The new role of Director of Operations was explicitly created to oversee the interlocking of support departments. This Director sits on Academic Management Committee (AMC) alongside the Director of Research, who is custodian of the Research Strategy, and the Academic Registrar, who has ultimate oversight of the Research Office. The structure of the Practitioner-Researcher network was debated and confirmed by AMC, which takes formal reports, via Research and Ethics Committee, on Research Centres and nodes, and on this basis develops future strategy. Discussion of college research activity thus takes place within the same forum that

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has oversight of the infrastructure and facilities that support research. AMC is chaired by the Deputy Principal (Academic) who, as the senior specialist academic in the college, authors the Academic Plan and has a place on Executive Management Committee where issues of staffing and budgets are ultimately approved. These arrangements ensure that consideration of research and its resourcing is properly joined-up.

This strategic management arrangement effectively ensures that research resources are considered alongside, and thereby materially benefit from, general institution-wide initiatives, such as development of a new fund-raising department (leading to more bursary provision) and planning for a new building (leading to more spaces for research practice). These larger initiatives are strategically combined with research-specific actions, such as developing new leaders and new funding streams, to ensure that Central research is a healthily sustainable project.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Central is characterised by its historic closeness to its professional industries. Its conservatoire programmes supplying the theatre professions are increasingly informed by research. The strategy for building that research has drawn on the industry relationship and in doing so makes a very particular, perhaps unique, contribution to the discipline. That contribution might be seen as an integrated model of scholarly research triangulated with both pedagogic and professional practices. Core to this model, and to the disciplinary contribution, is the enhancement of the understanding of the Practitioner-Researcher. This has the potential to break down traditional barriers between the 'academy' and the 'creative industries'. Thus Central's contribution can be described under three general headings:

1. Re-articulating the understanding of arts practice;
2. Extending the range of established specialisms;
3. Supporting and extending the constituency of the discipline.

1. Re-articulating the understanding of arts practice

Practice-as-Research has come into increasing importance in the sector. Central has sought to develop an intellectually rigorous PaR culture which is institution-wide, permeating the **Practitioner-Researcher** Network of specialist nodes and embracing published outcomes of all kinds. The research postgraduate cohort has a substantial PaR component, with students coming to Central for this reason. PaR's prominence is sustained by whole-institution discussion that is opened to a wider audience through seminars, colloquia, conferences and publications. These developments are headed by the current DoR, Robin Nelson, who has brought to PaR a specific philosophically-grounded model. This has been expounded in conference keynotes and invited seminars across the UK and beyond, and is fully set out in his recent publication *Practice as Research in the Arts* (Palgrave 2013).

Alongside the conceptual modelling of PaR in particular, Central's research contributes to new approaches to thinking about the practices of theatre and performance articulated in traditional print publication modes. Shepherd's series, 'Readings in Theatre Practice' (Palgrave), is unique in bringing together the history, philosophy and methods of theatre practices. His book *Direction* appeared in 2012, but the series began with Brown's book *Sound* (2010). Brown's research (see his impact case study) has helped establish sound as a discrete practice of theatre. His insights are disseminated internationally through invited keynotes in both academic and industry settings. The work of re-thinking the operation of performance practices has also been taken forward by connecting with disciplines outside theatre studies. For example, Fisher, who chairs the Concepts

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node, co-convenes the TaPRA Theatre, Performance and Philosophy working group, and his conceptual and contextual work draws upon classical philosophical traditions to re-read performance (Sartre and acting, Kant and Castellucci). Bush-Bailey has convened TaPRA's History and Historiography working group: her research develops historiographic method through engagement with autobiographical performance practice (*Performing Herself*) and issues around re-enactment and performance history (*CUP Theatre History*). Shepherd uses cultural history to re-think arts practices as seen in his *Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Theatre* (commissioned by CUP) and edition of *Performance Research* 14(2) 'On Training'.

2. Extending the range of established specialisms

Central extends the range in three main areas: intermediality, puppetry and applied theatre. Each has a dedicated **Research Centre (RC)**. The study of **Intermediality in Performance** is an emergent area. Key academic leaders include Nelson, whose work on Theatre and Intermediality in the context of the IFTR/PSi working groups produced *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* (2013). Nelson was 'scientist in charge' of the Marie Curie Fellow's research into intermedial Shakespeare. The application of intermedial work to devising processes is seen in Alexander's *Touching Space* (co-produced by Complicite and the Royal Academy of Arts, sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline and supported by Active-8 and Metfilm in Ealing), which explored the technology that might enable two groups in different continents to perform in virtual space. Strengthening the intermedial focus are the founders of two seminal theatre companies, Matt Adams of Blast Theory, a Visiting Professor, and Julian Maynard Smith of Station House Opera, an AHRC Creative Fellow. Both regularly present their work, often alongside Nelson, to audiences of academics and postgraduates from within Central and beyond.

Although it is an established discipline elsewhere in Europe, puppetry research is still emergent in the UK. Central's RC in **Puppetry and Object Theatre** is run by Cariad Astles, who has published extensively, and includes Nenagh Watson, founder of DooCot and Barking Dog companies and an AHRC Creative Fellow. The Centre has strong links with promoters and practitioners, including the Puppet Centre Trust and Little Angel Theatre and has co-curated and advised on puppet festivals and colloquia in the UK and beyond.

The study of applied theatre is well established: Central's particular contribution is to develop a focus on applied theatre as a practice in relation to health and well being. The development and consolidation of the specialism are seen in the parallel projects of the **Theatre Applied RC**: Hougham's work in drama therapy, Low on sexual health, Stuart Fisher on trauma and McNamara on transgender (the latter two subjects of impact case studies). This research has been taken forward in funded projects (NHS, Wellcome Trust) and partnerships (Sesame Institute, arts organisations in South Africa, Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand). It has been disseminated in the workings of professional associations (Hougham is a key figure in the European Consortium of Arts Therapies Education, organising three of its conferences, 2009-13; Low has advised Etafeni Centre, Cape Town), conference keynotes (e.g. Congo, Denmark, Taiwan) and themed journal issues. As context to this specific focus the Theatre Applied Research Centre has produced a number of scholarly articles illustrating and framing a range of applied practices and organised a conference in 2010. As chair of the Research Centre, Sally Mackey has been one of the national leaders researching performances of place. She is active in AHRC networks, panels and working groups, and her research is supported by funding grants from the AHRC and cross-institutional partnerships.

3. Supporting and extending the constituency of the discipline

As in any academic institution, Central staff play their part in supporting the networks and organisations specific to the discipline. They help to convene working groups for TaPRA (Bush-Bailey, Farrier, Fisher, Low, Mackey) and IFTR (Edelman, Nelson); they serve in the AHRC's peer-review college and referee for the AHRC, ESRC, Leverhulme, Wellcome and for publishers and journals (Cambridge University Press, Methuen, Palgrave, Routledge; *Journal of British Association of Drama Therapists*; *Discourse*; *Ethnography and Education*; *Performing Ethos*; *Qualitative Research*; *RiDE*; *Theory, Culture and Society*; *Women in Performance*); they give lectures and seminars at HEIs nationally and internationally and examine PhDs. The college has for several years hosted the November meeting of SCUDD. It has sponsored Performance Studies international since 2009, and now offers a postgraduate prize of £500 at PSi. But there is a contribution that is more specific.

Central has developed and used its **historic relationship to industry** for two main research purposes. In part it has sought to extend the impact of academic research into the industry (see [impact template](#)) and, crucially, it has drawn high-level professional practitioners into discussion with academics. Interactions with industry have increasingly been given a research inflection, often to mutual satisfaction. The strategy has sought to build bridges between 'academic' and 'professional' communities in its advocacy of the Practitioner-Researcher concept.

To this end Central has curated regular series of events in which major professional practitioners have interacted with academic audiences. Its public lecture and seminar programme has included speakers such as Michael Boyd, Katie Mitchell, ORLAN. The Theatre Noise conference featured Cicely Berry, John Collins, Heiner Goebbels. Speakers at the annual Craig lecture include Paule Constable, Tobias Hoheisel, Antony McDonald. Since 2010 these events have drawn audiences, both internal and external, of about 828 per year. In such a project it is important that the industry names are not bolted-on celebrities. Central has therefore sought to co-host events with professional companies and associations. These include Sadler's Wells, the Critics' Circle, the Society for Theatre Research, the National Theatre: thus a symposium on Neo-Burlesque at Central led, via a partnership with the International Workshop Festival, to *Kleinkunst*, a series of three events (2009-10) hosted by the Roundhouse. In the work of co-curating, professionals themselves become facilitators of academic research.

In drawing together industry and academy, in doing its work of hybridity, Central has promoted research activity in new constituencies. It has used its membership of the AHRC-funded Creative Works London to develop a research project with Battersea Arts Centre; it was a founding member of the University of London's inter-institutional Centre for Creative Collaboration. But perhaps most significant is Central's development of research activity in domains of professional practice. By actively participating in Central's research culture the founders and associate directors of leading companies – Blast Theory, Complicite, Fevered Sleep, Station House Opera – are beginning to frame their creative practices more overtly as research enquiry. The International Centre for Voice, previously simply a membership organisation for voice teachers across the world, is developing research capacity. The professional Association of Sound Designers, co-founded by Central staff, now hosts research colloquia with academics. Central has aimed to create not just a researching practice but a researching industry.

Thus, in line with its strategic vision to become a new sort of hybrid institution, joining industry and academy, practice and research, Central will continue to make its contribution to the discipline by finding for the discipline new opportunities and new sites for thought and creation.