

Institution: University of Bedfordshire35 - Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts

Unit of Assessment: 35 - Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts

a. Overview

In 2008 a strategic decision was taken by the recently formed University of Bedfordshire, namely to implement and enhance research in Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts (MDDPA) by building upon the strengths of the department of performing arts and that of media, art and design. Research in the field is coordinated by the Research Institute for Media, Art and Performance (RIMAP) which is part of the Faculty of Creative Arts, Technologies and Science (CATS). RIMAP, led by Professor Garry Whannel, promotes staff research and doctoral studentship through a number of schemes. The Institute has research specialisms in new media publishing, cross-media integration, political communication, journalism, sport and the media, community radio, performance and creative writing. Successful bids have been made for some of the substantial research projects highlighted below.

Within RIMAP – and the core of this unit of assessment submission – sits the Centre for Applied Research in Dance (CARD), which supports and promotes excellence in research in e-dance and knowledge transfer between the academic and professional domains within the subject. CARD enhances learning and teaching in dance through the development of advanced scholarship in the subject by hosting externally funded research projects (see b). Central to both CARD and RIMAP, and to the research culture and vision promoted by both, are the following aims:

- To provide a relevant, informed and industry-facing research experience;
- To build a supportive, challenging, creative and intellectually stimulating research environment;
- To develop a coherent and enhanced sense of research identity.

Research is developed to respond to staff expertise in professional practice and to current developments in both the academic and professional – or industry facing – music, drama dance and performance contexts. Such a culture is informed by, and benefits from, a well-established interdisciplinary vision, promoted by and within RIMAP.

Key to research in MDDPA at the University of Bedfordshire are four distinctive, though interrelated approaches to performance studies: 1) practice as research; 2) technologies of performance; 3) performance science; 4) new histories and historiographies.

Each approach informs one or more of the research narratives of the current research culture in MDDPA, as well as the way research-active members of staff explore how diverse compositional, dramatic choreographic, performance-making and somatic practices can generate new insights into the notions of art and art-making. Such explorations, in turn, question and challenge existing discourses and long-held beliefs in the various fields. Thanks to the support mentioned further on, research active staff members are helped achieve both national and international reputation, through publications, participation in projects and performance making. It is such reputation that attracts, postgraduate research students, often interested in operating within the parameters of Practice as Research (PaR) – the main strand of the MDDPA's research culture.

b. Research strategy

Period since RAE2008

In line with the strategic plan for research developed in 2008, the University of Bedfordshire has pursued and will continue to pursue high quality research and enterprise aimed at influencing policies and practices in relevant areas. Such a mission has led to the rapid growth of the five strands that underpin research in MDDPA, thus showing resilience in a rapidly changing environment.

1) General consolidation: Since its inception, MDDPA at the University of Bedfordshire has maintained and constantly developed an outward-facing research vision in which both practice based research and interaction with professional practice are key components. At the core of this vision is the mission of promoting excellence in imaginative, collaborative, interdisciplinary way, while advancing knowledge exchange between the academic and the professional domains within Music, Dance, Theatre and Performing Arts. Imaginative approaches to research inform and are clearly evident in each of the five distinct, though interactive themes research-active members within MDDPA are currently engaging with:

- Dance and Technology
- Choreography and Performance-making
- Practical historiographies
- Performance Writing/Writing in Performance
- Dance and Science
- Performance Technologies

Each of these five strands constitutes areas of priority in MDDPA's culture, in line with a research trajectory that projects into the future and strives to keep constantly abreast of ground-breaking findings in *related subject areas*.

1.1) *Achievements:* Interdisciplinary projects that encompass the themes listed above include the 2007-10 *e-Dance Project – Relocating Choreographic Process* and the 2011 international conference *Digital Futures in Dance*.

2) Continued improvements in

- *quality of outputs:* moving in general from submission of papers at conferences to quality journals, established conferences, single-authored books, performances and multidisciplinary practice-based research projects;
- *timely research student thesis submission:* improved central and institute research programme monitoring and management via use of *Pebblepad* software.
- *monitoring demands on key researchers to avoid over-stretch:* promotions to more research-focus roles; use of research funds for researcher time.

2.1 *Achievements:* 95% of the research active staff work is published in refereed and scholarly journals such as: *Dance Research*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, *Dance Chronicle*, *Research in Dance Education*. Performances such as *The Price of Everything*, which build on practice-led research, were performed at the Edinburgh Festival. The number of research student has grown from 2 in 2009 to 12 in 2013.

3) Funding stream: a key aspect of the 2008 strategic plan remains to date the need to implement research by creating projects funded by a broad and non necessarily academic-specific range of funding bodies and institutions. Such diversification is intended to mirror the multifaceted interdisciplinary and international approach to research that is distinctive of MDPPA at the University of Bedfordshire.

3.1) *Achievements:* Funding was successfully received from the AHRC, the Arts Council for England, EU funding, the Karina Ari Foundation (Sweden), the Festival of the North East.

4) Collaboration: is a major feature of MDDPA at the University of Bedfordshire, and the creation of research and industry facing networks remains core to the securing an sound, stimulating environment

4.1) *Achievements:* Since 2008 successful and lasting collaborations have been secured with *dancedigital*, the European Association of Dance Historians, Milton Keynes Theatre and National Youth Theatre. CARD, moreover, has hosted a series of externally funded research projects such as the AHRC/EPSRC/JISC funded project 'e-Dance: Relocating Choreographic Process' (2007-2010). This collaborative project involving dance and e-Science researchers from the University of Bedfordshire, University of Leeds, University of Manchester, and the Open University

Environment template (REF5)

5) Seminars and Conferences: since 2008, the MDDPA research strategy has also helped maximizing research impact by publicizing research activities internally and externally through collaborative research projects and conferences.

5.1) *Achievements:* In 2011, for the University hosted the *Dance Science and Health, International Congress on Dance and Health* in partnership with Dance UK and Trinity Laban. In addition, RIMAP hosts a Research Seminar Series to promote illuminating dialogues, critical engagement and sustained collaboration across disciplinary lines on specific topics of wide interest and importance within MDDPA. This programme of invited academic speakers is supplemented by the *TestBeds* programme, which provides a performance platform for practice-led research outcomes to be disseminated to both a academic and general audience as part of the professional performance programming of the University of Bedfordshire Theatre.

Current Vision

Key to the current vision remains the involvement of staff members in professional and creative practices, whether they be early career researchers or more experienced ones. With the support of the University, RIMAP and CARD, MDDPA will continue to focus on the winning of high profile research grants linked, though not limited, to interaction with professional realities.

The strategic initiatives to implement this vision are:

- 1) implementation, continuation and further consolidation of collaborative and interdisciplinary work through associations with scholarly institutions and the industry.;
- 2) strengthening and further explorations of new technologies in relation to MDPPA;
- 3) implementation of an internationally recognised Dance Science culture;
- 4) maximizing of research impact through publicizing MDDPA's activities nationally and internationally through multiple channels – web-based, print or film.
- 5) building staff and student capacity: creating new Professors and readers in the MDDPA fields; encouraging new researchers; participating in professional development opportunities regionally and nationally; and increasing the research student cohort.

c. People:

i) Staffing strategy and staff development

Within MDDPA, recruitment to the University is in the first instance to the Department of Performing Arts and English, in line with university-wide policies, including equality and diversity. Female and male staff members have been supported during maternity/paternity. Disability issues such as dyslexia and long-term illness are appropriately recognised and managed with the staff concerned. For research staff recruitment and skill development, UoB has a university-wide policy that follows national principles: QAA Code of Practice and UK HR Excellence in Research. In May 2013, UoB's institution-wide Concordat implementation plan was awarded the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award, which will be rolled out in the coming period.

1) Recruit, Retain & Nurture: UoB has a successful policy of recruiting, retaining and nurturing of staff as the cornerstone of our sustainable staffing strategy, i.e.:

- (1) **Recruit:** The Department of Performing Arts and English actively recruits excellent researchers who successfully contribute to the development agenda. Since 2008 new principal lecturers and readers have been recruited to lead the development of new areas of research. MDDPA recruitment, however, does not focus on experienced and excellent researchers, but looks also very favourably at early career researchers as the researchers of the future.
- (2) **Retain:** To retain research staff, UoB operates an annual promotion scheme that recognises and rewards excellence.
- (3) **Nurture:** The University provides centralised support for individuals to access funding information. Both RIMAP and the Knowledge Hub provide support for bid writing and ongoing research management support once funding has been received. Such support is available for both experienced researchers and for early-career ones.

Environment template (REF5)

2) Research Staff Recruitment and Skills Development for Researchers

Specific programmes for research skills development are:

- **Quality Research:** MDDPA received £ 15,000 QR money during the examined period for research and researcher development, out of which £5,000 went to CARD.
- **Seed Funding:** UoB provides seed funding to initiate research activities across the university through a competitive bidding process. This helps staff obtain further funding, establish collaborative partnerships and also build on their initial research to successfully bid for further external funding.
- **Consultancy/Secondments:** Staff who have a specific industry-facing approach to research are encouraged to undertake consultancy roles through funded secondments to professional organisations.
- **Conference funding:** RIMAP, through QR funding, supports staff members to participate in top-tier national and international conferences, to enable effective dissemination of findings, ensure targeted impact, form new collaborations and develop existing ones. This funding is in addition to support within externally funded projects.
- **UoB Conference:** researchers of all levels within MDDPA present posters and research presentations.
- **RIMAP “Away Day”:** is held annually to support researcher skills development.
- **Funding Bid Preparation Workshop:** UoB workshops on successful bid writing targeting specific funding bodies run regularly, and highlight selection of the right funding body and calls to apply,
- **Coaches/Mentors/Buddies:** UoB systematically ensures all senior researchers are engaged in mentoring and developing early career researchers, and are themselves mentored.
- **Research student supervision preparation:** Early career research staff without supervision experience are included in teams to upskill them.
- **Early Career Researchers:** There are 4 ECRs within MDDPA, who started as lecturers during this assessment period. All ECRs are encouraged to be actively involved in research by balancing their teaching load. The ECRs bring vitality to the environment to ensure sustainable growth.
- **Student to staff progression:** 1 UoB doctoral graduate now works in the department, and it is certain that the number will grow in relation to the growth of PGR students attracted by the MDDPA provision.

ii) Research students

Each student has a supervisory team with a discipline-expert Director of Studies and second supervisor, at least one of whom must have successfully lead a student to completion. Where appropriate students may have an industry expert on their team, and/or a third supervisor who brings specialist knowledge. Student progress is monitored by the supervisory team, IRAC and RGS. At around four months (FT-equivalent), the proposed research programme is formally assessed by internal examiners. The student presents an open seminar at two years (FT-equivalent) on their research to transfer/progress to the PhD stage, if the formal report is approved by two internal examiners. All full-time students are allotted office space and computing facilities in one of IRAC’s research labs. Part-time students have hot-desking provision.

UoB research students self-organise the Research Students Support Group (RSSG) to provide a forum for discussion of academic, social and administrative matters of interest relating to research students. IRAC students are encouraged to develop their own networks and social events. The IRAC Board includes a student representative.

Particular features:

- **UoB-wide provision:** All research students are supported by the Research Graduate School (RGS). RGS provides support during the application phase, admission stage, registration and induction. RGS then takes the students through the various stages of progression, followed by thesis submission, viva and award of the degrees. Several mandatory and optional research skills training courses are conducted for the research students throughout their time at UoB,

Environment template (REF5)

including some online licensed packages.

- **External conferences:** Research students are expected, as part of their research programme requirements, to present to at least one national and one international conference.
- **External event funding:** Students may apply for funding (fees, travel, subsistence) to attend other events, where judged appropriate to their research.
- **UoB Conference:** Doctoral students are expected as part of their research training requirements to present at least one poster, and in most cases two; this includes part-time students.
- **TestBeds:** Research student are invited to engage with and contribute to TestBeds, a series of publicly attended practice-led research performance platforms.
- **Internal events:** Students participate in a variety of events, from large, institute-wide colloquia to small, centre or team-based activities and presentations.
- **Faculty bursaries:** The Faculty of Creative Arts, Technologies and Science provides bursary support for outstanding undergraduate students to enter postgraduate research programmes.
- **Equality and Diversity:** RIMAP recruits internationally.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

As the University does not have endowments or other significant similar resources, UoB policy is that all institutes actively seek funding opportunities.

Infrastructure and facilities: RIMAP infrastructure is managed by the Director of Institute and supported by the Deputy Director and dedicated administrative staff. The infrastructure supports in the bidding process, starting projects and for smooth running of projects in the research institute. Published output and data are managed through central university repositories. Access to the infrastructure is applied consistently for both institute users and visitors and external users.

Researchers involved in practice based or practice led research projects have access to a range of state of the art facilities within the University including; three large dance studios, a performance studio, a mid-scale theatre with 280 seats which provides researchers with unique opportunities to present their practice-based findings to the general public, a state of the art motion capture studio, a range of media editing facilities, movement analysis, and biomechanics and physiology laboratories for Dance Science oriented projects. There are two archives housed on Bedford campus, which provide access to primary source material; the Student Performance Archive and the Physical Education Archive, which contains significant resources in Early British Modern dance.

Income: Staff within MDDPA have had considerable success in achieving external income to support research from both UK Research council and other funding bodies such as Arts Council England. Recent examples include: £500,000 AHRC DEDEFI Large Research Grant. 12-month project *MiPP: Movement in Place Platform*. University of Sussex lead organization in partnership with King's College London and University of Bedfordshire (Professor Helen Bailey, Co-Investigator) 2010-11

£400,000 AHRC-EPSRC-JISC e-Science Scheme Award Large Research Grant. Three-year project *The e-Dance Project - Relocating Choreographic Process: the Impact of Collaborative Memory and Grid Technologies on Practice-led Research in Dance*, University of Bedfordshire lead organization in partnership with University of Leeds, University of Manchester and The Open University (Professor Helen Bailey, Principal Investigator) 2007-10.

£79,000 Arts Council England Grants for the Arts Award. Three-year project *Dance Digital*. (Dr Tamara Ashley, Principal Investigator) 2011-14.

£28,000 Arts Council England Grants for the Arts Award. 12-month project *Ash*. (Dr Daniel Bye, Principal Investigator) 2012-13.

£15,500 Arts Council England Grants for the Arts Award. 9-month project *Composite Bodies: Networked Choreography* Ersatz Dance. (Professor Helen Bailey, Principal Investigator) 2009-10.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

Staff members within MDDPA have a significant track record in establishing research

collaborations with other HEIs nationally on high profile projects. Among the most notable examples are Professor Helen with projects involving the University of Manchester, the University of Leeds, the Open University, King's College London and the University of Sussex; Dr Tamara Ashley with the University of Bournemouth, and Dr Daniel Bye with Royal Holloway, University of London. Staff have also developed significant collaborative relationships with industry, for instance Bailey with Animazoo and Step Out Arts and Ashley with *dancedigital*.

- 1) **Editorships, Editorial Boards and Reviewing:** Three members of staff (Ashley, Bailey and Poesio) are currently involved in editorial work and/or reviewing for refereed journals and academic institutions such as *Journal of Emerging Scholarship*, *SCHODE* and *Choreologica*.
- 2) **Directorships:** In line with the vision outlined above, members of staff are encouraged to undertake directorships, as in the case of Dr Ashley with *dancedigital*, Professor Bailey with *SCHODE* and Dr Poesio with the European Association of Dance Historians (Chairman). Such involvement, in turn, has led to a series of keynote addresses delivered by these three academics in a variety of scholarly contexts, such as Oxford University, Boston University, The Lowry in Manchester and the Southbank.
- 3) **External Examining Research Degrees:** External examining provides a unique opportunity to broaden research vision and to secure collaborations and partnerships. Within MDDPA, staff members are encouraged supported to undertake such activities, as in the case of Dr Ian Carr for the University of Chester, Professor Bailey for the University of Salford and Dr Poesio for Goldsmiths/University of London, the University of Chichester, and the University of Limerick.
- 4) **Invited lectures:** Dr Carr and Dr Ashley have also been invited to deliver lectures at De Montfort University for the *British Dance and Diaspora Study Day* and at the Southbank Centre for *Candoco: Turning 20 Dialogues Day*, respectively. As from 2009 to date, Dr Poesio is involved in a series of dance specific lecture held both at La Scala Theatre, Milan, and the Royal Opera House, London.
- 5) **Commissions:** Since the inception of a research culture within the MDDPA at the University of Bedfordshire, commissions have acknowledged the high standards, as well as the repute, of the research undertaken by some members of staff. Particularly significant are the invited exhibition contribution of Professor Bailey to "Growing Knowledge: The Evolution of Research" at the British Library in London and *Story Hunt*, a performance commissioned to Dr Bye by the Festival of the North East.