

<b>Institution:</b> University of Hull
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C25: Education
<p><b>a. Overview:</b></p> <p>Significant progress has been made in developing the research environment since the last RAE, with a variety of improvements identified in this submission. Educational Research at the University of Hull is predominantly located in the Faculty of Education, which is situated on two campuses at Hull and Scarborough, though there is significant educational research in other faculties. Whilst the Faculty of Education has always been committed to supporting and developing researchers of national and international quality, developments since 2008 have seen the production of a more strategic, coherent and cohesive approach, which complements a strong tradition of individual research excellence, and outstanding research supervision. Not only have the activities of the research groupings (<i>Policy, Theory and Practice, Technology Enhanced Learning, and Professional Education</i>) been increased, but significant work has also been undertaken in providing a more structured and supportive research environment, especially for beginning researchers.</p>
<p><b>b. Research strategy:</b></p> <p>Current research strategy grew out of a critical review of the 2008 strategy. Whilst this strategy is responsive to short/medium term demands, more importantly it lays down the foundations for a vital and sustainable research culture. Thus whilst it responds directly to REF research criteria, high achievement on these – the quality of outputs, the impact of research, and the nature of the research environment – is seen as fundamental to the faculty's longer term aims. This strategy then has seven key objectives. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To improve the quality and quantity of research outputs for each research active member of staff;</li> <li>2. To ensure that research impact awareness and activity is embedded from the beginning of all research activity;</li> <li>3. To emphasise the research focus and ethos of the Faculty;</li> <li>4. To create greater alignment of research projects with university plans for interdisciplinary research activity;</li> <li>5. To support and enhance greater transparency, more effective governance and staff involvement in research planning and development;</li> <li>6. To improve further the support for postgraduate research (see section c);</li> <li>7. To develop measures to increase competitive research income (see section d). Each of these will be described in detail.</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Each research active staff member's research outputs has been improved in quantity and quality, as judged by current REF criteria, by       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a staff induction process which involves discussions with the Director for Research and with others working in similar research areas. The Faculty workload model specifically recognizes their right – and their responsibility – to develop the ability to produce high quality research. This process is aided by formally constituted research discussions with senior researchers, with a research professor specifically focusing on helping staff generate external research income, as well as structured mentoring sessions with other senior</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

faculty members throughout the year;

- Establishing an external expert Critical Reading Group (CRG), consisting of a former RAE member, a Pro-VC for research, the Education Faculty Director for Research, and two other external experts on the current REF process. Initial judgements were calibrated at meetings where sample outputs were rated and compared. Staff members were then asked to provide 4-6 outputs, and to attempt a personal evaluation using REF criteria. These outputs were then read and commented upon by the CRG, and feedback was provided on an individual basis on both the judgments made, and on ways of raising their quality;
- Establishing a Faculty Reading Group. This internal group for reading outputs was developed from the CRG, with members of the CRG used in an advisory capacity. This consists of a representative sample of those whose outputs have been highly rated by the CRG in REF terms. They went through a similar calibration process in developing critical output appraisal;
- Cascading this critical ability through and beyond the Faculty. Members of both the CRG and the FRG now discuss with staff how to improve their outputs ratings, using similar calibration exercises. This strategy then helps identify the quality of outputs, and, by including all staff members in the process, helps develop wider critical awareness of what constitutes high quality research. The FRG is being expanded as individuals achieve high ratings from the CRG and the FRG, and they undertake calibration exercises, thus ensuring continuity and expansion. In addition, FRG members are now asked to appraise outputs by those applying for research-active posts within the Faculty.

2. Research impact awareness and activity is embedded from the beginning of all research activity by:

- Research users being identified and invited as regular attendees at research meetings;
- Inviting users to join steering groups when research projects are initiated, and to continue to invite them in helping pilot research instruments;
- Using the online proforma developed within the Faculty of Education requiring responses from those designing research proposals to a battery of questions regarding the potential for various kinds of impact being written into the proposal;
- Using the quality and extent of impact (as defined by current REF documentation) as major criteria in evaluating bids for both internal and external research funding.

3. Emphasising the research focus and ethos of the Faculty is being developed by:

- Prioritising research expertise and research qualifications in the recruitment, selection and induction of academic staff; this includes the appointment of a professor with expertise in gaining grant income, and the appointment of two readers and a senior lecturer;
- Developing coherent and cohesive research groups with more effective leadership. The maturing of research interests since RAE 2008 has translated into three active research themes: *Policy, Theory, and Practice*, specialising in empirical work and critical writing on steers behind educational policies at primary, secondary and tertiary levels; *Technology Enhanced Learning*, focusing upon the role of information technology in developing learning strategies internationally; *Professional Education*, with foci on examining new career teachers' experiences, the enhancement of learning in schools, and developing the involvement of children in school inclusion strategies internationally. These themes have been designed to encourage interdisciplinarity, and as a result researchers from other faculties are engaged in work with a number of these groups;
- Allocating workload which recognises the research active nature of academic

appointments; time is specifically allocated to this activity, as are expectations, plans and targets for the use of such time; workload allocation is also given to those engaged in developing its infrastructure, such as members of the FRG, research mentors, and research group leaders;

- Adopting the recommendations of a teaching and research working party, which has led to individual and group research now more greatly informing teaching activity. For example, each research group now contributes to the selection and development of modules at all levels of provision in their area of research;
- Extending and improving bi-annual research discussions between all academic staff and senior researchers within the Faculty. These occur at the beginning and end of each academic year, with agenda for the discussion of aspirations, setting targets, providing help and advice. The whole process is monitored in terms of personal development and research outcomes. Such discussions are normally underpinned by the prior reading of staff outputs to inform such discussions, and the setting of personal targets;
- Ensuring these research discussions are coordinated with the activities of the research groups, and with the research mentoring strategy. Mentors hold discussions with mentees at least three times a year, read outputs, help frame research proposals and provide personal support. These targets are recorded and coordinated with the other research discussions;
- Revising Faculty international strategy, which now views research development as an integral part of Faculty overseas activity in identifying potential collaborative research partners;
- Creating a working party of research group leaders. This working party has (i) led the development of modules in the major research areas; (ii) has developed research seminars for staff and students, including the critiquing of research methods; getting published; writing for academic purposes; obtaining research grants; and cultural aspects of teaching and learning. Finally, (iii) members of the working party are collaborating in the development of an international conference in June 2014 showcasing their research activities;
- Supporting staff applications to gain higher level qualifications, particularly doctorates. Concern about the sustainability of doctoral supervisions has been addressed by the doubling of staff with doctoral qualifications. Thus, in 2008 12 members of staff held doctoral qualifications. With faculty support and finance, In July 2013 there were 24 staff with doctoral qualifications, 19 on the Hull Campus and 5 on the Scarborough Campus. Another 14 staff are currently working towards doctoral qualifications with three more about to begin. The Faculty is on target to triple the number of staff with doctoral qualifications by the end of 2015.

4. Creating greater alignment of research activity with university and interdisciplinary ambitions is being achieved through

- Ensuring that research group discussions, individual research discussions and individual mentoring sessions more closely align Faculty activities with University strategic plans and key research performance indicators;
- Generating greater interdisciplinary involvement in educational research through (a) having representatives from other Faculties in the research groups (b) extra-faculty representation on Faculty of Education working parties, (c) the inclusion of extra-faculty members in the Faculty Reading Group; and (d) intra-Faculty involvement in all Faculty research ethics meetings;

**Environment template (REF5)**

- Creating an interdisciplinary research seminar series, at which each University interdisciplinary theme leader discusses with staff both university and Faculty perspectives on their themes, and jointly develops ways of engaging across the University in interdisciplinary research.

5. Greater transparency, more effective governance and staff involvement in research activities have been achieved by

- Creating a Research Finance Committee to oversee the allocation of research funds in order to more closely monitor the strategy and spend of research monies over the financial year. This has had the additional benefit of widening expertise, promoting a more sustainable research strategy, and ensuring greater transparency and equity in the approval of staff applications for internal research funding;
- Creating a Faculty Reading Group which not only appraises the suitability of outcomes for inclusion in the REF process, but as importantly provides critiques of outputs in order to enhance their quality;
- Developing a staff research mentoring process which has similarly increased the number of staff involved in participating in strategy development and sustainability;
- Creating a Research Group Leaders Committee to facilitate wider involvement in research strategy development.

6. Improving the support for postgraduate research activities (see section c).

7. Developing measures to increase competitive research income (see section d);

**c. People, including:**

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The Faculty takes full account of University equal opportunities policies, and stringently follows these in its staffing strategy and development. For example, it offers the same level of research support to individuals on continuing and fixed term contracts, and pro-rata support for those on part time contracts, including the funding of masters and doctoral degrees (a policy which is also offered to administrative staff). Staffing strategy also reflects the fact that the Education Faculty has strengths in a diversity of staff work experience prior to taking up a University position. This not only facilitates the development of external relationships leading to more impactful research, but also provides considerable expertise in teaching at the university level, and facilitates the development of pedagogical research (for example, Overton developing problem-based learning, Spencer investigating children’s reading strategies, Jolliffe researching cooperative teaching techniques, and Dunhill on inter-professional working). The emphasis in the Faculty on a research-led ethos has been strengthened by the appointment of academic staff who (i) strengthen existing research groups, (ii) produce quality publications, (iii) have the ability to gain external research funding, and help others to do so, (iv) possess doctorates, and (v) have the ability to supervise research students.

In order to encourage the vitality and sustainability of this research-focused culture, a number of strategies aimed at further developing early career researchers have been developed. The recommendations of a Faculty working party (2011-12) have resulted in (i) all staff having research induction sessions with the Director of Research and other senior researchers; (ii) the allocation of research mentors following such induction, along with (iii) specific research workload entitlement, (iv) full research discussions with senior research staff twice a year, and finally, (v) the strong encouragement to sample and then join one of the research groups.

The Faculty is also an active member of the University Concordat working group; the university

was awarded the European Union’s Excellence in Research badge in January 2012 in recognition of its work to support the development of research environments, and the Concordat working group develops and advises on the implementation of principles to support the career development of all staff.

In order to further progress a sustainable research staff structure, a number of strategic appointments have also been made since 2008. The strategic direction of the Faculty has been strengthened by the appointment of a senior Professor to focus upon facilitating the gaining of external grant income, and a Reader in International student support. These individuals are active researchers at international level, are first supervisors with doctoral students, and have won external research funding. In addition, another four members of staff have been appointed at lecturer level with doctorates, so boosting the ability to develop research degree supervision.

ii. Research students

The Faculty of Education has a strong tradition of recruiting and supervising high quality doctoral students, and of recognising the importance of discussing the appropriateness of a research-based or professional doctorate with each prospective candidate. Numbers have always been robust, and the REF period has seen an increasing number of completions – 6 in 2008-9, 5 in 2009-10, 10 in 2010-11, 11 in 2011-12, and 12 up to July 2013. Financial provision is made by the Faculty to facilitate student attendance and paper presentations at conferences, and one student was recently (2012) awarded the prestigious BELMAS best thesis award. The Faculty continues to develop its reputation for expertise in the supervision of overseas doctoral students, and thorough supervision and successful completions have led to many word-of-mouth applications. With the strategic appointment and development of staff with an expertise in international student supervision, this reputation can only be enhanced. The strategic aim of increasing supervisory capacity, which was described in the 2008 RAE submission, is now being achieved though the increase in staff with doctoral qualifications from 12 in 2008 to 24 by 2013, and the highly rated EdD programme is now undergoing its planned review, which will reflect and utilise the wider range of expertise available from the greater number of staff who now possess doctoral qualifications.

	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	Total
PhD	2	5	7	3	6	23
Research-based Professional Doctorates	4	0	3	5	4	16
Total	6	5	10	8	10	39

Strong student support is provided from the beginning of the degree process. All applicants submit a full proposal, which is read by two members of staff, followed by interview, with comments and recommendations made to the Postgraduate Research Director (PGRD). All research students enjoy a minimum of 12 supervisory sessions (ft) or 6 (pt) during the year, and a proforma with action plan is completed after each meeting. All students are supervised by a minimum of two supervisors, have regular contact with an academic coordinator for research degrees, and where appropriate, with an adviser for international students. Reviews of progress are made every year by both supervisors and students, which are then reviewed by the PGRD. All PhD students undergo a confirmation process a third of the way through their studies to ensure they are working at doctoral level, carried out by readers independent of the supervision process. Finally, all students complete selected methodology modules as part of their research training in discussion with their supervisors.

Improving further the support for postgraduate research (key objective 6) is being achieved by:

## Environment template (REF5)

- As noted above, by doubling the number of staff with doctoral qualifications;
- Appointing staff with expertise in postgraduate research support. The expansion in the number of overseas postgraduate research students has been supported by the appointment of a Reader specialising in international research student experience, and by financial support for members of staff taking doctorates in international education;
- By the allocation of responsibilities to two members of staff with concern for the wider social and academic support of research students, and by an enlarged provision of seminar series, both cultural and academic, dedicated to postgraduate needs;
- Upgrading the physical infrastructure for postgraduate students. For example, along with an increase in staff expertise, there are now two in-Faculty computer equipped rooms for research students with dedicated computers and software, which complements the central provision by the University Graduate School. Other hardware is available for loan from the Faculty, such as digital tape recorders and dedicated software packages, such as SPSS;
- Students' engagement with staff research is facilitated by the joint presentation of papers at conferences, and by Faculty financial support for students to do this;
- Finally, students' views are taken seriously through the conduct of postgraduate staff-students committees four times a year, and by student representation on all major committees.

### d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The Education UoA generated over £500,000 in research income during the census period, which reflects both the local, national and international nature of Faculty research. This amount might be described as steady but modest. Whilst 2012-3 shows the highest annual research income for this period, it is seen as essential to develop measures to triple competitive research income in the next five years (key strategic objective 7). This is being achieved by

- Appointing a senior Professor to focus upon facilitating the activity of staff with respect to bidding for and gaining external research income;
- Collaborating with the University Research Office has led to the 0.2 appointment of a member of that office working with this Professor to facilitate the process of gaining external research income, as well as the setting up of a joint working party to develop strategies and procedures for gaining more external funding;
- Ensuring all staff understand that as a condition of research workload allocation, they are expected to be involved in, or be principal investigator on at least one research bid per year, depending on their degree of experience;
- Requiring research groups to write at least one collaborative research bid for research monies annually;
- The creation of seminar series to provide help and advice in searching for and securing research grants;

In terms of infrastructure, academic staff occupy rooms with regularly updated IT equipment, and have access to administrative staff to facilitate research work. Staff can also bid to an internal research fund for the pump-priming of research, conference attendance, and other activities like interview transcribing. The amount in this fund has been increased by 25% since 2012. In addition, staff have access to numerous quantitative and qualitative software packages including SPSS, NUD\*IST, NVivo and EndNote. Staff are also well supported in access to the Brynmor Jones Library on the Hull campus, and the Keith Donaldson library at the Scarborough Campus, which

have been refurbished and extended in 2012-13 at the cost of over £15m. Similar efforts to increase IT coverage, campus-wide, are currently being undertaken.

**e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base:**

There is strong evidence, nationally and internationally, of joint and shared research with groups and individuals at other universities: Montgomery is a member of a research network of cultural and linguistic practices at Roskilde University, Denmark; Overton shares research projects with UK HEIs and with the University of Stockholm; Martin shares research projects with one UK HEI and two Japanese Universities; Burden has research collaborations and outputs with Universities in the USA, Australia and Hong Kong; Filippakou has similar activity with 4 UK HEIs, Bottery collaborates on research projects and publications with researchers in Hong Kong and Macau; Smith has collaborated with researchers in the US, Australia and Spain on a research output on religious education.

There is also good evidence of editorial work collaborations and contributions. The *Journal of Education for Teaching*, an international, SSCI rated peer-reviewed journal, is located within the Faculty of Education. Three members of staff (Montgomery, Martin, and Scott) have guest edited peer refereed quality journals, whilst staff are members of 16 different editorial boards, as well as acting as referees on 41 different peer refereed journals during the REF period.

In terms of collaborations through conference organisation, Jolliffe organised the IASCE biannual conference attracting delegates to Hull from 23 countries, whilst 8 members of staff have either been single or joint organizers of other international conferences, including overseas in Bruges, Malmo, and Seattle. Staff have also been invited, with expenses paid, to present keynote addresses at 33 different conferences, and have made several hundred presentations at national and international conferences.

There is also strong external recognition of staff research contributions. In terms of doctoral work, the number of staff with doctorates, as described above, is on a rapidly rising trajectory, and staff have been invited to act external examiners at over 35 thesis examinations, whilst Bottery has acted as external examiner for EdD programmes at Manchester and Birmingham Universities, as well as external consultant for the creation of an EdD programme at Oxford Brookes.

The contribution to the research base is also recognized in the advisory role staff have been asked to play, as evidenced by the advisory role that Burden has given to the Hong Kong government and the UK House of Lords on educational applications of IT; by Jolliffe's appointment to a ministerial working party on the teaching of phonics; by Hopkin's evidence to the DFES and then DFEE on religious affairs; by Scott to a parliamentary subcommittee on experimental biology; by English's advice to government on primary mathematics, as well as to two governments ministers (Gibb and Truss) on the new mathematics curriculum. In addition, staff research is recognized internationally and nationally through appointments as: member of the Singaporean research funds awarding committee (Martin), appointment to the Royal Society of Chemistry (Overton), JISC (Burden), BELMAS National Council (Bottery), Chair of BESA (Palaiologou) and NCAP (Adams). Filippakou has been a visiting fellow and adjunct professor in New Zealand; Bottery has been visiting professor at the Universities of Brno, and York St. John, as well as advisory professor at the Institute of Education, Hong Kong.