

Institution: University of Cumbria
Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education
<p>a. Overview</p> <p>The unit has a long history of teacher education and Educational Research through St Martin's College, but has been working to enhance its research profile significantly since the formation of the University of Cumbria in 2007. Throughout the assessment period, Education has remained as a coherent unit, most recently as the Faculty of Education, operating at campuses in Lancaster, Carlisle and London. However, the unit also links in to other areas of pedagogic research across the rest of the University. The provision of the unit may be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the largest UK providers of initial teacher education programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate student teachers within a large educational partnership with more than 1000 employers (mainly schools). • Masters level programmes in Education and in Educational Leadership for experienced qualified teachers as well as a postgraduate certificate programme in Academic Practice for newly appointed Higher Education lecturers and work-based learning supervisors in collaboration with the University's central academic development unit. • Provision of PhD in Educational Research, primarily undertaken part time by education professionals, plus a collaborative Educational Research Professional Doctoral programme, delivered in partnership with Lancaster University. • Contract research and evaluation work for partner schools, plus contribution to research programmes for the Higher Education Academy. <p>Educational research across the University is supported and co-ordinated by the Research Institute for Professional Learning in Education (RIPE). There are two main areas of educational research supported by RIPE, in terms of age phase and academic level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research in Higher Education including teaching, learning and assessment in Higher Education as well as research on policy and academic development. • Research in school and early years education. <p>However key themes in the research strongly link these phases including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional identity and practice of educators (BOYD). • The pedagogy of initial teacher education and of continuing professional development for teachers (ELTON-CHALCRAFT; HYMER) • Assessment of, for and as learning (BLOXHAM, BOYD). <p>b. Research strategy</p> <p>The key characteristics of the research strategy for education since RAE 2008 involved capitalising on the change and momentum from the establishment of the University of Cumbria, in order to develop and enhance the research environment within the unit. The key driver was the commitment to underpinning teaching and particularly teacher education with the highest possible quality of educational research. The strategies to support this were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To continue to strengthen the existing infrastructure for educational research, including: creation of a new research centre for educational research; appointment of a Faculty research co-ordinator; increasing focus on scholarly and research outputs in the induction and appraisal processes; strengthening internal and external research networks; development of an online open access journal; and appointment of honorary research professors. 2. To further develop our research networks and broker collaborative research by University of

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Cumbria educational researchers with researchers based in other universities.

3. To support the development of new researchers, including increasing the numbers of staff registered for higher degrees and encouraging the co-authoring of papers and providing mentoring for research projects led by less experienced researchers.
4. To support three discrete areas of research: enhancing teaching, learning and assessment in Higher Education; initial and continuing teacher education; enhancing school based practice.
5. To encourage and support high quality practitioner research by lecturers across the university, by student teachers, and by teachers in our partnership schools. Systematic enquiry is at the heart of our pedagogy for initial teacher education and continuing professional development and this means that practitioner research is central to our mission.

The 2008 strategy concentrated on increasing the depth and breadth of the research activity within the unit, primarily through developing the capabilities of academic staff, many of whom have entered academia from practitioner backgrounds. The development strategy was given impetus by the change process as the new University became established and staffing, research policies, structures and programmes were renewed. The leveraging of infrastructure to support research development has been a key strategic aim during the period, and has evolved during the assessment period. Research in Higher Education within the Unit was driven by the central learning and teaching development team until the establishment of RIPLE.

The Faculty's hosting of the national research-focused Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN), including its online open access journal, is an example of our commitment to supporting practitioner research for teacher educators. The Faculty's development of the Cumbria Studies in Higher Education Network (C-SHEN) and our Practitioner Research in Higher Education (PRHE) online open access journal is another example of our commitment to supporting practitioner research by lecturers across a wide range of subject disciplines.

Educational research at the University is now led by the **Research Institute for Professional Learning in Education (RIPLE)**, which is a centre for all research activity including school and early years age phases (which are mainly located in Education, Health and Outdoor Studies) but also Higher Education research which is distributed across the University. This single centre provides a rich and interdisciplinary base for educational research, supporting internal and external networking by academics and PhD candidates. The work of RIPLE is largely project based, and supports all individuals and teams involved in educational and pedagogical research across the University (for example, O'RIORDAN), and includes research coach-mentoring, supporting research design, assisting with bid writing for external funding, linking with international research organisations, brokering collaborative research projects, supporting enterprise projects that build from research outputs, organising conferences and promoting research outputs and achievements to extend awareness and engagement in educational research. The pivotal role of RIPLE in educational research has been supported by a Professor as Director of RIPLE.

RIPLE identifies and strategically develops themed areas of research and include:

- Professional identity and practice of educators.
- The pedagogy of teacher education and development, assessment of, for and as learning.
- Educational leadership and change management.

The research priorities and themes have been established by RIPLE through engagement with

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schools and through the TEAN, C-SHEN and PRHE networks and journals. The key drivers for our current strategic priorities in educational research include our strong commitment to continued partnership with employers and other stakeholders in the education sector. The key strategic objectives within the next five years are:

- To support the University's aim to achieve Research Degree Awarding Powers.
- To focus research support on doctoral students, staff pursuing doctorates and on post-doctoral researchers, and to channel resources specifically into increasing the quality of research undertaken by the unit.
- To enhance the position of RIPLE as the single coordinating point for all educational research at the University, as a key tool to drive the enhancement of research quality and strategic value of research activity.
- To enhance support for research funding applications and increase external funding income including small scale collaborative research and development projects funded by partnership schools and school clusters.
- To streamline educational research to fit with the RIPLE research themes, in order to further develop niches of quality research and support strategic development of the unit. Whilst the research themes will continue to evolve to address stakeholder concerns and emerging policy drivers, they will maintain their focus on the practitioner to fit with the expertise of the unit and the wider research culture of the University.
- To build a new area of research in educational leadership and management as a growing area of our professional development work with schools and teachers.
- To further enhance the number of research active staff within the unit (including in the Education Faculty and those in other disciplinary areas), and focus on developing individual experience, capabilities and capacities to increase the quality of research undertaken.
- To increase the number of PhD students supported by the unit.
- To strategically extend and enhance the programme of visiting academics, in order to strengthen and support research themes.

c. People, including:**i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

The unit provides research leadership through the Director of RIPLE, Faculty management, a Research Coordinator, a number of Professor and Readership posts, specialist administrative support for research and enterprise activity and coordination with the central University Research Office. This structure also acts to coordinate the activity of Emeriti, Honorary and Visiting academic staff to maximise their engagement and contribution to capacity building within the unit. The commitment to strengthening research leadership and rewarding the development of excellent research is shown by the appointment of two Readers through the University's externally reviewed annual Professors and Readers appointment process. The two appointments to Readership (Dr Sally Elton-Chalcraft and Dr Pete Boyd) have helped to strengthen research capacity building and demonstrated the University's recognition of, and incentive for, the publishing of high quality research outputs. Within the assessment period, the educational research unit has appointed and engaged with eminent Visiting and Emeritus Professors, bringing expertise in practitioner research; including Professor David Hopkins, Professor Jack Whitehead, and Professor Hilary Constable. By contributing to University-based conferences, seminars and supervision, including mentoring of relatively new supervisors, these individuals make a valuable contribution to strengthening the Educational Research environment. All of these honorary professors are experts in practitioner research in education and have contributed to strengthening this focus within the unit.

The University also received full funding from the commercial educational enterprise Osiris for appointment of Professor Barry Hymer, an expert in giftedness and Mindset Theory. Professor Hymer has added real strength to the educational research team, and stimulated several funding bids and projects, as well as contributing to doctoral supervision and research mentoring. This appointment has helped RIPLE to increase our engagement in collaborative research and development projects funded by schools, and is a key element of our strategic funding for research. Each project has a post-doctoral mentor attached to it, but also usually involves one or more academic staff who are currently pursuing their doctorate.

Staffing strategy is developed across the University with co-ordination from the central Human Resources team. In the Faculty of Education, lecturers appointed in teacher education often need to prioritise their successful practitioner experience gained in schools, and thus many academic staff are new to Higher Education, do not have high level qualifications or experience of research. For this reason, Faculty strategy is strongly focused on supporting new researchers and, in addition to providing in-house, traditional, PhD study, we have collaborated with Lancaster University to offer and co-teach a specialist teacher educator pathway on their professional doctorate in research in Higher Education. The University has gradually strengthened the focus on research and scholarship within the appraisal process and is strategically raising the expectations for gaining a doctorate before staff are able to gain promotion to leadership roles.

The University is committed to supporting the research development of its staff and fully endorses the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Whilst the University does not currently have a large number of dedicated research staff (i.e. research only posts), we are committed to providing development and training opportunities in order to strengthen research capabilities. As stated previously, a high proportion of our work is in practitioner-based disciplines, with many of our academic staff coming into Higher Education from professions; therefore providing opportunities for staff to gain skills in research is fundamental to maintaining and developing our research capabilities, capacities and culture. We are currently undertaking a benchmarking exercise against the principles of the Concordat, and are planning to submit an application for the HR Excellence in Research award in 2014.

Our commitment to researcher development is fixed in the University's goal to achieve Research Degree Awarding Powers, as stated in the strategic aims on the creation of the University. It is reflected through our engagement with the pilot for the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), which the University subsequently intends to roll-out to all academic staff. This will be an additional element to help tailor our support mechanisms to the needs of individuals. It will be integrated into research and scholarly planning activity, which takes place as part of the annual review process. Staff also benefit from a fixed annual allocation of 25 days Scholarly and Research Activity (SARA) time and access to the Epigeum research skills package, Sabbatical Leave funding and a Research and Scholarly Development Fund (RSDF). Staff are supported in their academic and research development through the Research and Scholarly Plan mechanism, which provides guidance, and links formal research objectives into each individuals' main annual personal and professional development planning.

As part of our commitment to developing Early Career Researchers, the University currently provides fee waivers and additional support mechanisms for staff members developing their research capabilities (which have not normally been required during their time as a practitioners outwith the University) and to undertake higher degrees. The large number of professional fields within the University's portfolio of programmes means that provision of staff development opportunities is crucial to developing research capacity and capability. Specific support relevant to education is the PgC in Academic Practice, which is mandatory for newly appointed academic staff who have less than three years' experience in Higher Education. If newly appointed staff do

not already hold a relevant Masters award, they are required to proceed from the PgC onto a Masters level programme within their own subject discipline, or to the Master in Academic Practice programme, and a fee waiver is provided for this by the University. The University then provides opportunities for different routes to gaining a PhD, with fee waivers (for internal PhD or collaborative professional doctorate with Lancaster) or competitive bid funding for external PhD. Specialist support is also provided by the C-SHEN, TEAN and the Teacher Education Research Network (TERN) networks detailed in section d, which particularly aim to support the development of research skills and capabilities. Whilst support is particularly focused on developing Early Career Researchers, the University's appointment, promotion and progression process for Professors and Readers provides a transparent career progression route for all academic staff. Additionally, bespoke support for post-doctoral researchers is provided through RIPLE, through mentoring and additional support for research planning and research funding bids.

The University has a comprehensive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy and a set of related policies and procedures that help to ensure equity of opportunity for all students and staff. This includes positive engagement with stakeholder groups external to the University, particularly with creating access for local community and under-represented groups. Specifically in relation to research activity, the procedures allow monitoring of equality, diversity and inclusion across research student recruitment, progression and completion. The policy is also applied to research staff appointment, promotion and support and where appropriate equality impact assessments are completed to evaluate the potential impact of new policy or procedures. The quality of research is maintained on a day to day basis by a Faculty Research Coordinator, who deals with bidding and quality across the unit.

The unit contributes directly to the University's Research Ethics Committee, with the committee including both the Director and at least one other member of RIPLE in its structure. It therefore safeguards the integrity of its own research, including provision of discipline-specific guidance on ethics and design, and makes an important contribution to research quality and integrity at University level through this scrutiny of ethical clearance applications.

ii. Research students

The University of Cumbria is currently working towards acquiring Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) and there are strategies and policies in place to achieve this, coordinated by a cross-institutional RDAP Steering Group. Research degrees are currently validated by Lancaster University; however, the management, administration and delivery of the postgraduate research programme is entirely managed by Cumbria. The University registers post graduate research students, provides supervision and research training, and manages quality and progression through the Cumbria Research Office and Graduate School.

The unit works with the Graduate School to provide quality training and supervision for a number of PhD students, the majority of whom are part-time practitioners working in educational settings, including staff at the University undertaking higher degrees. RIPLE also collaborates with the Educational Research Department in Lancaster University to lead a module and share teaching and supervision on a specialist Teacher Education pathway of a Professional Doctorate in Educational Research. Teaching, supervision and examining at doctoral level in collaboration with experienced Professors in a research intensive University also provides very helpful professional development for staff from the unit.

Research students are supported by monthly research sessions and a two week summer school (including a Doctoral Colloquium), and are part of a wider informal PhD network which encourages interdisciplinary working and provides a supportive structure for skills development. Beyond these structures, postgraduate research students are embedded into the unit's educational partnership, and are effectively treated as members of staff. This reflects the fact that the vast majority of the students are academic staff, teachers or lecturers in partnership employer

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organisations, but also increases the learning and skills development opportunities for individuals, and ensures that PhD students are able to make a direct contribution to the educational research environment. Supervision of doctoral students is undertaken by experienced, research active staff from within the unit, primarily those who are submitted in REF2014, but is sometimes enhanced with specific expertise from Visiting and Emeritus post holders, where the research requires additional expert support.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

- Collaborative networks include the faculty's Educational Partnership with schools, RIPLE, C-SHEN / TEAN / TERN and other external networks developed through conferences, subject discipline interest groups, associations and professional bodies.
- Funding available for obtaining higher degrees and to support research activity (including the sabbatical leave scheme) is an important contribution to staff research activity.
- Dissemination through internal conferences is encouraged through Faculty, Research Office, and central learning and teaching support services for sharing of research and academic enterprise activity.

Examples of Funded Research Projects include:

- External Examiners' Understanding and Use of Academic Standards Project (Researcher: Professor Sue Bloxham) funded by the Higher Education Academy and the Quality Assurance Agency (lead institution Oxford Brookes University), £18.5K.
- Becoming a Teacher Educator (Principal Investigator: Dr Pete Boyd), funded by ESCalate the education subject centre of the Higher Education Academy, 2008 – 2011, £7K.
- Becoming and Being a Lecturer in Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (Principal Investigator: Dr Pete Boyd), funded by the health science and practice subject centre of the Higher Education Academy, 2009, £12K.

Examples of research and development projects with schools include:

- Applying Mindset Theory: teacher researcher project – Ulverston Victoria High School, Cumbria – 2012 to 2014, £7K per annum.
- Learning Conversations with Young Children: teacher researcher project, Everton Nursery School & Our Lady Immaculate Primary School, Liverpool. 2012 to 2016, £7K per annum.
- Other one year projects include Wandsworth, £5K / Lancaster Royal Grammar, £3.5K / Dallam School, £5.5K / Matthew Moss High School, Rochdale, £6K.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

The Faculty collaborates to promote research activity and high quality outputs:

RIPLE works in partnership with more than 1000 employer organisations that belong to our educational partnership, mainly schools. In addition, RIPLE also maintains engagement with alumni, including teachers working across the UK. This rich collaboration with schools, teachers and pupils enriches the research environment by providing access to relevant contexts and data for educational research. Examples of current on-going projects include Learning Conversations in the Early Years with two schools in Liverpool, and Teacher practitioner researchers investigating Mindset Theory with secondary schools in Lancashire and Cumbria.

Researchers within RIPLE have contributed as authors to guidance documents published by the Higher Education Academy in relation assessment in Higher Education, and academic induction for professional educators as follows:

- '*A Marked Improvement: Transforming Assessment in Higher Education*'. BLOXHAM was part of a team of experts commissioned to develop this professional resource for the Higher Education Academy, 2012, and work as a 'supporter' to Universities piloting it in practice.

- Boyd, P., Harris, K. & Murray, J. (2011) *Becoming a Teacher Educator: Guidelines for induction* (2nd Ed.). ESCalate, Higher Education Academy: Bristol. Available at www.escalate.ac.uk/8508. BOYD was lead author on this publication. The first edition won the BERA / Sage Practitioner Research Award in 2009.

During the assessment period, members of the unit have undertaken roles including National Chair of the Association for Partnership in Teacher Education, membership of the National Executive Council and of the Research Committee of the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), British Educational Research Association (BERA) Executive and Conference Committees, Higher Education Academy ESCalate Advisory Board membership, publication advisory group of the National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN), Curriculum Board of the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD), Committee Member for the National Association of Primary Teacher Educators, Member of the International Advisory Board HELO (Higher Education Learning Outcomes) Transforming Higher Education Project, Norway, (2012-current).

Members of RIPLE are convenors of British Educational Research Association (BERA) special interest group on Higher Education (BOYD & BLOXHAM). Other members have contributed to the BERA Race and Ethnicity special interest group (ELTON-CHALCRAFT) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) advisory group on assessment (BLOXHAM). Staff have also founded and chaired the organisation of the Assessment in Higher education conference, with colleagues from 6 other universities on the organising committee. Research collaborations have been undertaken with Manchester Metropolitan University, University of East London, York St John University, Oxford Brookes University, University of Worcester, University of Huddersfield, University of Barcelona, Edge Hill University, University of Bolton and a collaborative project funded by Esmee Fairbairn foundation with Liverpool John Moores University, University of Chester and Liverpool Hope University.

Members of the unit have also been reviewers for the following journals: *Assessment and Evaluation*; *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *European Journal for Teacher Education*, and *Studies in Higher Education*, *Assessment Policy and Practice*, *Quality in Higher Education*, *Learning and Instruction*, *Teaching in Higher Education*, *Higher Education*, *Health Education Research*, *Youth and Policy*, and have held editorial posts for *Gifted Education International* and for the *British Journal of Special Education*. Members of the unit review submissions for BERA and SRHE conferences. Through the C-SHEN network members of RIPLE have established the 'Assessment In Higher Education' conference, which has grown into an internationally recognised research meeting. They have also launched and edited the online open access journal, *Practitioner Research in Higher Education* (PRHE), in 2007, with the 7th volume now in progress.

The Faculty is also an active institutional member of TERN; a researcher network of 7 North-West education departments. The network is now in its fifth year and organises regular research seminars and workshops with a focus on building research capacity in Education and encouraging collaborative bids and projects. For example, a recent TERN event hosted by University of Cumbria focused on mixed methods in educational research, with an external speaker and an attendance of 30 academics, including participants from all 7 TERN member institutions. The University also hosts TEAN, which is a national research-focused development network for the teacher education sector. TEAN generates sustained collaboration with other teacher education departments across the UK, including through the annual TEAN conference (with 140 delegates in 2013), workshops and seminars. Staff from the unit also contribute to TEAN through the development of online resources and by means of publication in the *TEAN journal*, established in 2010, with the 11th issue now in progress.