Institution: St Mary's University College
Unit of assessment: Education 25

a. Overview

In RAE 2008, 4.6 FTE staff were entered for this unit. For this submission 11.96 FTE are being submitted. In addition to these, there are many others who have contributed significantly to the research environment. Submitting colleagues come primarily from the School of Education (SoE) but include those researching from an educational perspective in the institution's Schools of Theology, Philosophy and History (TPH), and Management and Social Sciences (MSS). This narrative is predominately set within the SoE's research culture and infrastructure. The Unit's research environment is capable of being sustained as a result of a range of factors including (inter alia): the recruitment since RAE2008 of new research-active staff; establishment of an effective SoE Research Committee with a focus on supporting research initiatives (this replaced the Research Steering Committee in 2011); purchase of equipment (hardware and software) to facilitate research; provision of research space and library for PGRs (there have been significant major benefits-in-kind through the donation of books by, amongst others, Dr Eaton and Reverend Forrest during the REF assessment period); and investment in the publication of the SoE's research journal *ReflectED*.

The success of the unit's existing research culture is evidenced in a number of ways: an increased number of staff undertaking and completing doctoral studies; more staff undertaking independent and collaborative research in partnership with schools, professional bodies and other institutions; an increase in the number of doctoral applications; a rise in research output by staff and an overall and growing appreciation, since the RAE, of the need to be research-active practitioners.

External reviewers involved for the purposes of the REF noted that amongst the themes for the Unit's research narrative are values-led and faith-based education, consistent with the Christian ethos and character of the University College and this is reflected in various REF outputs for this unit. Part of Dr Fincham's work, for example, presents an enquiry into perspectives of stakeholders towards the teaching of PSHCE in English Catholic secondary schools. Dr Glackin's research concerns school chaplaincy and the part that a lay person may play as 'a presence in pilgrimage' for secondary students, whilst Dr Lydon's research is on the concept of teaching as a vocation in the Catholic Christian context. Dr James' doctoral work concerns the generation of her *theopraxis*; a morally committed practice in the light of Christian belief. Other prevalent UoA themes are: sustainability, technology, environment, gender, inclusion, educational accountability, eco-literacies, disability and different aspects of teaching, learning, leadership and management. This demonstrates something of the range of research interests. Substantive research issues concern music, teaching games for understanding (TGfU), science, mathematics and literacy, whilst research into aspects of cognition holds a central place in the unit's submitted outputs.

The research environment at St Mary's (SMUC) supports a culture characterised by intellectual and academic rigour, innovation and positive contribution within the discipline and teaching profession. Many colleagues within this Unit perceive their role as educational researchers (as defined by Whitty, 2005/6) not merely researchers in or of education. One research cluster has adopted a self-study action research methodology, making claims to have improved their own and other's learning, maintaining that this holds implications for and impacts upon the social formations of the University College and other professional settings in which they work and conduct research. This thinking is evidenced in two completed doctoral theses (2013) using this research paradigm and two others that are nearing completion. This builds on work begun by Professor McNiff, a key player in the RAE2008 in the fields of professional practice and education.

The Unit's research culture is primarily supported and overseen by the SoE's Research Committee established in 2011 and chaired by the School's newly appointed Programme Director for Research since January 2013. Whilst since the RAE2008 the SoE functioned as a distinct entity, significantly with effect from September 2013, a combined School of Education, Theology and Leadership (ETL) has been created, providing new opportunities for collaborative projects potentially resulting in excellent research. The Research Committee has been responsible for celebrating and disseminating staffs' research outputs and impact through regular research seminars. Members also organise academic reading groups and research conferences and seek out possibilities for collaborative and international research initiatives, allocating funding according to centrally approved criteria. The Research

Committee also formed an editorial group which was established to oversee the publication of an in-house research journal, *ReflectED* (first published in Summer 2011). This bi-annual publication is disseminated to staff, partnership schools, students and other academic organisations. It is indexed in the British Library catalogue. All colleagues with educational research interests and those students studying for Masters qualifications are encouraged to submit articles, reviews and editorials to this peer-reviewed journal. Submissions are also received from students and practising teachers in Finland and Australia. In 2012, two senior colleagues from these countries joined the editorial team to develop its international and collaborative character. Two further members were added to the editorial team in 2013 from partner CREST (GuildHE) institutions in the UK. For some contributors, this is a first experience of being peer-reviewed and published, impacting on and enhancing the research culture. It is appreciated that Early Career Researchers (ECRs) will continue to benefit from greater dialogue and discourse around research matters. The infrastructure therefore includes a wider research team of staff who serve as mentors and coaches to inexperienced and less experienced researcher colleagues. This develops and sustains a culture of research and related scholarly activity in tandem with the already high standards in teaching and learning (the SoE was awarded an *outstanding* grade in 2011 by Ofsted).

The University College's established research environment ensures the future health and well-being of this unit for the REF submission and its on-going contribution and impact to the field of education is demonstrated in the two submitted case studies (West-Burnham and Clarke). One concerns educational leadership and management and the other, issues of sustainability. A significant factor in our vision for research sustainability is our clear understanding of our teaching/research nexus as encapsulated in these studies.

b. Research strategy

Two main drivers of our academic work have been SMUC's research strategy and the changing landscape of Initial Teacher Education. The teaching/research nexus provides stimulus to overcome a theory/practice divide whilst offering guidance/impetus for relevant research initiatives. It has been a key role of the Unit to prepare an annual action plan which sets out key strategic aims for the coming year and to evaluate the achievements related to previous foci. The identification of priority areas for research is conducted annually with senior managers and staff. The Research Programme Director, Dr Renowden meets monthly with the Head of School, Dr Glackin, to review progress and identify what is needed to implement research priorities (one example being a meeting in September 2013 to discuss the place of research in the Annual Operating Plan). Plans throughout the REF assessment period set out actions which aimed to support colleagues in contributing to the research culture such as:

- Provision of remission from teaching for those engaged in doctoral study;
- Sabbaticals for those involved in on-going research (taken up by two members from the SoE in each of the academic years 2011/12 and 2012/13);
- An EdD programme for staff provided by Nottingham Trent University;
- The appointment of another Research Professor, John West-Burnham (appointed 2008) to join Professor Paul Clarke (appointed 2007).

Staff have engaged in collaborative writing projects with these two Research Professors to support their necessary development of academic research and writing skills through such sessions as 'How to write a research proposal' and 'Getting published'. Seminars organised by the School have provided a forum for ECRs to disseminate their research, and reading groups have been established to motivate staff to link theoretical understanding with their practices. Colleagues have been required to compile a three year writing action plan to emphasise the importance of regular writing to develop more research-enriched teaching and to contribute to their ongoing development as researchers. Funding priorities have also included improved resources to facilitate research activity e.g. NVivo data analysis software, iPads, digital video and audio recorders for data collection (see Facilities below for further details). One post-RAE2008 priority was for more colleagues to obtain doctorates and the SoE now has seven staff with PhDs, four of whom have achieved this status since the last RAE and within the 2012-2013 academic year. Another more recent priority has been to increase the number of external research grant applications. As a result two research project applications were submitted in 2012-2013 to the Nuffield Foundation (totalling £150,000). In 2011 Dr Chung was awarded a £5,000 British Academy Grant for research on 'Emulating the Finnish Teacher Education Model'. Staff are supported in

continuing to pursue external funding for their projects and this remains a priority during the next REF assessment period.

Staff within this unit have been encouraged to undertake doctoral supervision training and six SoE members have done so during the academic year 2012-2013, an increase from one in 2011-2012. This is evidence of a growing cadre of staff who can offer effective and sustainable doctoral research training and supervision. In addition, many participated in cross-SMUC opportunities for research staff development, including: initial training and updates for supervisors; supervisor discussion fora; specific research skills training; and funding workshops. Full engagement in the University College's strategies for research has enabled the unit to learn from other SMUC Schools and to take an active part in the decision-making processes at senior level. As a result, the profile of research within the Unit has been raised during the REF assessment period, with certain colleagues constituting role models when aspects of teaching and learning are discussed. An example of this is two Teaching Fellows' involvement in University Training Days on education and assessment (fellowship status having been conferred for the first time within the unit since RAE2008).

Future strategic aims will focus on the successful development of a distinctive research culture across the new ETL School and associated collaborative SMUC Schools. In order to respond to initiatives in teacher education and other educational settings, the University College is investing in support for academic staff to ensure they can maximise the impact that their research has on practice, thereby increasing its significance. One example of this would be plans to further research within the Catholic school partnerships that currently exist. Another form of evidence is our involvement as founder members of the Education Futures Collaboration which gives colleagues access to a range of digital technologies to support dissemination and engagement. The Collaboration is a network of innovative teacher education institutions which shares the goal of using digital technologies to support school-based and FE-based practitioners in accessing research findings and in working as co-researchers with academic staff. EdComms, the online communities of practice environment www.educationcommunities.org allows staff to create private or public online community workspaces to support collaborative research and practitioner engagement with colleagues around the world. This way of working supports the efficient gathering of research evidence and benchmarking of knowledge across institutional and national boundaries. It is anticipated that such engagement will enable us to become leaders of collaborative networks at an international and national level, thus enhancing staff research profiles and encouraging publishing. Colleagues submitting in this Unit are taking the lead in introducing this initiative, which will enhance the possibility of collaboration with other disciplines, across the University College.

Strategic Aims and Objectives for the next five years:
1. **To develop a distinctive culture of research**
   a/ To establish a new Educational Research Centre named after a previous Head of School of Education (Professor Patricia Wade) – hence to launch the Pat Wade Centre for Educational Research in Spring 2014 which will become a focal point for research and dissemination;
   b/ To support leaders of research to be at the forefront of the discourses around emerging education initiatives e.g. academies, free schools, government policy, curriculum development;
2. **To increase external funding for the support and development of research**
   a/ To increase the volume and success of external grant applications;
   b/ To enhance the research support from externally-generated enterprise;
3. **To enhance the reputation of St Mary's in educational research excellence**
   a/ To promote and develop theologically-informed research through and within the existing Aquinas Centre (re-launched in 2013);
   b/ To further the reputation of research in the field of Catholic educational leadership and management with schools through the Aquinas Centre;
   c/ To continue to build upon the reputation as leaders in fields of excellent educational research focusing on certain key areas; primary and secondary curricula / sport / RE/ reflective and self-study methodologies / values-led pedagogies / eco-literacies / sustainability / educational leadership;
   d/ To grow involvement with Education Futures Collaboration in order to develop more on-line international community workplaces;

4. To develop further the vitality of the research environment
a/ To increase the number of staff with doctoral awards;
b/ To continue with the strategy for recruiting more research-active staff;
c/ To train and encourage more qualified staff to examine on doctoral programmes;
d/ To continue to build up a vibrant community of PGR students and to provide them with improved real and virtual supportive study spaces;

5. To provide a supportive and comprehensive approach to developing staff as researchers
a/ To provide opportunities for ECRs to develop research with measurable impact in partnership schools, making use of the existing infrastructures in place in SMUC, e.g. sabbaticals;
b/ To increase the percentage of research-active staff within the unit;
c/ To ensure that the majority of staff compose a research career plan and writing plan;

6. To increase the quality and quantity of research outputs
a/ For senior researching staff to be publishing internationally-recognised material and presenting at significant national and international conferences;
b/ To establish an in-house publishing house - to publish *ReflectED* and other volumes (a second book is at the planning stage between Professor West-Burnham and colleagues within this unit around themes of educational social justice and concepts of childhood).

This research strategy explicitly supports the teaching/research nexus through promotion of effective professional practice aligned with diverse research approaches. These aim to improve pedagogy in schools and, by association, the dissemination of knowledge at SMUC and elsewhere. It has been written with the 2020 REF in mind. Applications for School research funding now have to include an explanation of how the research will contribute to the REF and an indication of what the impact of the research will be.

c. People, including:
i Staffing strategy and staff development
The staffing strategy is needs-driven and constrained by cost. However, new staff members are employed to meet teaching and researching needs with a greater focus on employing staff undertaking post-graduate studies themselves, and/or ECRs who are ready to undertake independent projects. Some independent research activity undertaken by staff appointed in 2011-2012 included: educational blogging; literacy practice in schools; problem-solving in mathematics; and perception in science. In addition to supporting new staff to carry out research with schools, work continues to support the career development of researchers. Staff appointed in June/July 2012 provided relief for existing staff to undertake sabbatical research. Although SMUC has no formal sabbatical leave scheme in operation centrally at present (which is under review), a targeted scheme was implemented to support staff in preparing for the REF2014. Staff workload is allocated on an individual basis across discipline areas to facilitate planned periods of research activity.
The majority of staff within the submitting Unit are employed on permanent contracts. Programme and Academic Directors are offered a Fixed Term Contract for three years in line with SMUC's staffing policy, although their substantive post is retained as permanent. Approximately 70% of staff work full-time.
Employment of academic staff within the unit is robustly monitored by our HR department to ensure we recruit individuals with appropriate qualifications and who either have a Masters/PhD or are working towards these awards. One of SMUC's strategic aims is 'to continue to attract and develop high calibre staff' in order to 'strengthen research capacity' and a culture conducive to the development of research-active individuals. SMUC's Research and Enterprise Development (RED) team's primary function is to support research and enterprise activities across the University College. It also provides support for grant applications and oversees the development, dissemination and implementation of the institutional research strategy and related policies. Thus, RED has been established to promote and support excellent research.
Throughout the REF assessment period, the work of key Professors McNiff (who left 31/8/2008), Clarke

(appointed 2007), West-Burnham (appointed 1/9/2008) and others with significant national and international profiles in their own areas, has contributed to the support of ECRs. In 2013, Professor West-Burnham wrote and edited a text with School colleagues; *Rethinking the Curriculum: Embedding moral and spiritual growth in teaching and learning.* Twelve SoE members submitted chapters, many for the first time as their confidence to research and publish findings has developed.

Each member of staff in the School is asked to classify him or herself on a continuum of research activity/production in the following bands:

- Independent researcher;
- Early career researcher;
- Emerging researcher- someone undertaking research for the first time.

This classification system enables the School's Research Committee to gauge the level of support required for colleagues' research activities, and to demonstrate the value that is placed on their contribution and expertise. Full Staff Days (when academic colleagues and support staff meet) always have a research element to them, including research-focused expert speakers. On these occasions the SoE's Research Committee explains the support given to each category and explores how colleagues might engage additional support by increasing their research activity and output. This also allows the Research Committee to demonstrate that funds are spent equitably across the different categories.

All staff are offered the same opportunities for personal development in conducting research. The research development of staff within the UoA is supported on an individual basis by an appraisal scheme (Staff Review), which includes specific targets for Personal Research Plans on an annual and five-year basis. An institutional workload planning model promotes the recognition of research activity in line with the staff appraisal scheme. At annual Staff Review, opportunities are discussed for Continuing Professional Development and staff are encouraged to take active roles in subject professional associations. During the academic year 2011-2012 typically, a total of 35 staff from the SoE attended CPD courses. In addition to the ten research days offered to all staff, those studying for a research degree or undertaking specific projects are supported through: research days built into their annual entitlement; mentoring by peers and professors within the School; financial support from SMUC and dedicated staff development and training at School and University College level. An institutional action plan will ensure full alignment with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers by the end of the 2013-2014 academic cycle.

ii Research Students

It is a goal to continue to establish a community of existing and incoming PGR students for they will form a vital element of the research culture of this UoA. A fundamental objective of the Unit's research strategy is to convert more Masters-level students into PhD students and to seek out more external doctoral candidates. Two doctoral applications have been approved in 2013 in the SoE (in addition to one student already registered and one award during the assessment period). As SMUC becomes engaged in the DfE's School Direct initiative, a strategy for encouraging Head Teachers to engage in higher degree study is being developed through existing SMUC networks.

At the point of the REF submission, there are 21 doctoral students across the newly-created School of ETL and two in the process of registration which bodes well for the future of the research environment. It is hoped that the strengthened links between theology and education and leadership will be cemented by PGR students who want to engage in interdisciplinary research across these areas in the future.

Directors of Studies are responsible for ensuring that appropriate training is made available to their research students, in line with a skills audit based on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. Opportunities are available for all registered PGR students to receive development funding at UoA level to support their studies. The SMUC Research Student Sub-Committee reviews the support and training provided by Schools for each of their research students through the Annual Report process. PGRs have access at School level to research seminars, keynote lectures and symposia delivered in part by resident and visiting Professors. In addition a central PGR skills training programme is provided at SMUC locally and via the University of Surrey's SPLASH programme. The SMUC programme culminates annually in a multidisciplinary PGR student conference held in June. Students also have the opportunity to attend a number of research symposia, workshops and conferences across a range of disciplines at CREST (GuildHE's Consortium for Research Excellence, Support and Training, CREST)

partner institutions.

A postgraduate research study space is available to research students. Creating virtual space for students to be able to engage in dialogue around their study has also been a primary step which has been achieved through the development of a dedicated online PGR module delivered via the St Mary's VLE.

d. Income, Infrastructure and Facilities:

QR Funding

Each School within SMUC is allocated a proportion of the institution's QR budget which is used to support existing and new research activities and is allocated according to centrally-approved criteria. As a result of the formation of the new School of ETL (with the addition of Theology) the School's QR allocation will increase significantly. In the final year of the REF assessment period, QR funds for the SoE were £8,950. Priorities for this funding have included conference participation, investment in resources and outside speakers. Some funding has been allocated to the emerging role of a research assistant; to develop the School's research websites and to scan horizons for possible collaborative research projects. The journal, *ReflectED*, is also funded through this budget and acts as a tool to link quality research with praxis with partnership schools and other national and international partners. The new ETL School's funding figure for the academic year 2013-2014 based on QR allocation and PhD income is approximately £77,000 and it is hoped this will help realise more research potential. Staff have been encouraged to be inventive and creative in seeking external funding for their research initiatives.

IT Provision to support research

A PGR Module is hosted on the St Mary's VLE containing all relevant administrative documents and research programme resources and providing access to an online Research Methods course known as Epigeum. Opportunities have been provided for both staff and students to receive training on the VLE and Epigeum.

Investment during the REF assessment period to improve the School's research infrastructure and facilities includes:

- Studio Code software - September 2010 £21,202;
- Mac Book Pro - March 2011 £3,568;
- Apple iPads - July 2011 £1,402;
- Digital Cameras / digital recorders and microphones - May 2012 £718.53
- Apple Macs - July 2012 £6,734;

An annual round of capital bid funding exists at SMUC and any research unit can submit an application through their Head of School for research equipment and facilities. The availability of state of the art equipment and software is fundamental to the establishment of a professional approach to research. Equally importantly is staff training and support to use these resources effectively which is provided by the IT and Information Services Departments at SMUC.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Influential contributions to the discipline and research base are made through published theses and other academic works. Research resulting in the generation of new knowledge in the field of education is also disseminated through papers given at prestigious national and international conferences and colloquia.

Examples of dissemination of research findings by colleagues submitting in this UoA are as follows:

- Dr Armstrong's work has resulted in new research initiated in Norway that tests out her ideas in a fresh educational and cultural context - results were presented at the Research in Music Education Conference (April 2013);
- The outcomes of Dr Ahmed's academic research in the field of cognitive psychology investigating factors affecting attentional efficiency have not only advanced psychological theory but also have had real life applications;
- Dr Hast's work (2009-2010) has been presented at national and international Conferences including a workshop aimed at children and parents to raise awareness of the overall research and findings (part of the Science Festival in Cambridge);
- Dr Chung ran an end-of-project seminar to present the findings of a recent British

Academy-funded research project at the Houses of Parliament on 30 October 2013. These are examples of indicators of wider influence and contributions to the discipline and research base laying the foundation for future activity and the production of excellent research.

Many colleagues in this UoA sit on professional bodies, using their research-enriched expertise to advise government and local authorities. The Schools represented in this UoA are committed to empowering members to research with colleagues in other institutions and opportunities for inter-disciplinary and cross-institution research have been created. Some examples are:

- Collaboration with York St John University at their annual Values and Virtues Conferences (2009-2013);
- International colleagues involved with *ReflectED* Journal as reviewers;
- 'Three is Better than One' a Collaborative Research Conference held at SMUC with two other Institutions, Glyndŵr and Marjon (2009). Amongst the many foci were: developing a research culture; research informed teaching and scholarship; appreciative and critical enquiry; collaboration and research; Research Centres; professional learning.
- SMUC as a member of GuildHE's Consortium for Research Excellence, Support and Training (CREST), a collaboration of 27 HEIs working together to develop research potential across its staff and PGR student bodies.

One way greater influence is achieved is through the Education Futures Collaborative Network in which the SoE has been taking a developmental role. This will enable staff to seek out research partners from other institutions and to develop impactful research projects through work with partnership schools. Evidence of collaboration and contribution to the research base will be staff's contributions to discussions on the network thereby raising the School's profile in guiding debate.

As stated, it is anticipated that the formation of the new School of ETL (September 2013) will have a significant positive impact on excellent interdisciplinary research with significant acts of collaboration already occurring, for example.

- A senior lecturer from Theology has joined the editorial board of *ReflectED;*
- A journal article has been submitted for publication in *ReflectED's* January 2014 edition, demonstrating Theology's capacity to offer significant views on public education;
- Three active researchers in Theology have joined the newly-formed School's Research Committee to identify and enable opportunities for further collaborative forms of research.

On that note, it is believed that the ground is prepared and seeds sown for future collaborative and excellent research leading to the next REF.