

**Institution:** The Open University

**Unit of Assessment:** C19 Business and Management Studies

### a. Overview

The research profile of the Open University Business School (OUBS) is highly distinctive owing to our deep engagement with large numbers of managers at the point of practice, our wide exposure to international perspectives of business and management and, consistent with the founding social mission of The Open University (OU), an enduring emphasis on issues of social importance and responsible management. The OU's unique multimedia platforms and technology allow us to develop innovative and world-leading approaches to designing, executing and disseminating research. Areas of research excellence include: social marketing; international management practice; power and control; strategic decision making; surveillance; behavioural finance; and management in the public and third sectors.

In the 2008 RAE the panel observed that good progress had been made in developing the research environment. We have made even greater progress over the current REF period compared with 2008, which includes: a doubling of our research income; an increase in PhDs awarded (from average of 3.0 to 4.7 per year); a significant increase in the number of publications in highly rated, international peer-reviewed journals (from 80 per cent to 99 per cent of submission); employment of a vibrant cohort of dedicated research staff (ten RAs compared with none); increased collaborations with leading international higher education institutions; and new and diverse channels to increase the impact of our research.

### b. Research strategy

Since 2008 RAE a strategy of fostering excellent research and targeted recruiting of excellent researchers has been pursued.

#### Current outcomes

1. Improved rate of research bidding and bidding success in order to improve the quality and range of research projects undertaken and the quality and impact of outputs produced, and to allow us to support research career development.
2. Increased quality of research outputs as measured by both peer review and public impact.
3. Increased the scale and quality of international research collaborations.
4. Consolidation and building of international research reputation around core cross-disciplinary themes, to which our subject-based research expertise contributes.
5. Growth of our research degrees programme in a sustainable manner that aligns with and supports our research priorities.

#### Future strategies

1. Engage research even more strongly with practice and policy (e.g. governance in the NHS).
2. Increase the reach and public engagement of research using the BBC and other media channels to disseminate research in addition to traditional outputs such as journals.
3. Engage further in cross-faculty research bids on key topics for business and society, such as sustainability, social marketing, new technologies (e.g. e-tailing, surveillance and monitoring), the impact of faith on governance, changing labour markets, behavioural and strategic decision making.
4. Increase further the scope of research to examine public and non-profit sectors of the economy.

We have established five research clusters within the School to foster distinctive and excellent research. The clusters provide intellectual homes for staff and encourage cross-disciplinary engagement within and beyond the School, ensuring that our research addresses significant managerial and social challenges. These clusters are listed below.

#### 1. Responsibility and regulation

Research here is at the forefront of contemporary thinking and includes: consumer ethnicity

(**Lindridge**); governance in the public sector (**Storey**); political leadership (**Hartley**); sustainability practices (**Smith**); gender and emotions in financial decision making (**Rutterford, Fenton-O’Creedy**); exogenous shocks and organisational responses (**Wilson**); and financial ethics (**Frecknall-Hughes, Rutterford**).

## 2. Social marketing (Institute for Social Marketing, ISM–Open)

This research cluster is recognised as a leader in social marketing research, applying commercial marketing ideas to change behaviours in order to improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and society. A specific aim is to apply research to influence public policy debates and to inform industry practice. Current projects include the Alcohol Policy Intervention in Scotland and England (ESRC, MRC-funded) (**Hastings, Harris**); Milton Keynes Electric Light Vehicle Infrastructure project (Office for Low Emission Vehicles funded) (**Dibb**); The Digital Brain Switch (EPSRC funded) (**Roby**); Disruption: the Raw Material for Low Carbon Change (RCUK-funded) (**Roby**); and Project Falcon (OGEN Low Carbon Network funded) (**Roby, Dibb**).

## 3. Information, surveillance and privacy

This cluster conducts ground-breaking research and engages in knowledge exchange on the many dimensions of the surveillance society, with a unique focus on implications for businesses and management. Funding is from the Leverhulme Trust and the EU, with ongoing funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Outputs relate to the exploration of employee privacy (**Ball**); the public’s reaction to security technologies (**Ball, Dibb**); and the public-private blurring of the surveillance landscape (**Ball, Dibb, Meadows, Daniel**).

## 4. International management practice

Drawing on our extensive links with practising managers, key areas of research include: power and control in international strategic management (**Fenton-O’Creedy, Wilson, Clarke**); management and entrepreneurial practice (**Claes, Meadows, Daniel, Ellis-Chadwick**); customer management practices (**Meadows, Dibb**); and the institutional and non-market contexts of strategy and international business (**Lawton**).

## 5. Teaching and learning

A focus for critical work and engagement in the broad area of pedagogy, the focus of research in this cluster is on practice-based learning, teaching and pedagogy in the business and management domains. Significant contributions to conceptual and empirical development include consideration of the role of discourse and voice and the scholarship of practice (**Ramsey**); the identity of academics (**Clarke, Knights**); and student choice (**Simões**). Other research critically examines HE institutional challenges and changes in both business school and university contexts (**Wensley, Wilson**).

### Achievement of strategic objectives

The School has made a step-change in the research environment since the 2008 RAE. We have seen a doubling of our research income per annum and a broadening of the sources of funding. The number of outputs published in high-quality journals and the proportion published in 3\* and 4\* journals has grown strongly over the REF period.

We support a critical mass of dedicated research associates and fellows (ten at October 2013) and have seen a growth in the number of PhD completions compared with 2008. We have significantly strengthened knowledge exchange and public engagement. Publications in addition to academic journals include practitioner journals, books, media coverage, policy reports and online media, including the institutional repository Open Research Online (ORO), iTunes U podcasts and blogs.

The number and calibre of our international research partners have significantly increased. This promotes the internationalisation and cross-disciplinary nature of our research and helps win further research funding (e.g. four recent major EU awards). Our targeted recent recruitment has resulted in the appointment of five high-profile professors (**Hartley, Knights, Lawton, Wensley and Wilson**), whose roles include Associate Dean Research and Scholarship (**Wilson**), public sector leadership (**Hartley**), strategy and international business (**Lawton**) and providing research mentoring for career young staff (**Knights, Wensley, Wilson**) as part of the strategy to foster

world-calibre research.

**Changes after 2008 submission**

The 2008 submission outlined our intention to establish a research cluster in international management practice, education and learning. This began in 2009 and operated successfully up to 2012 when it was divided into two cross-disciplinary research clusters: International Management Practice, and Teaching and Learning. The 2008 submission also articulated our intention to develop further our position in the field of social marketing which we have achieved through the establishment of the Institute for Social Marketing at The Open University (ISM-Open).

**Future developments**

The future strategy of the School is to continue to undertake and support research of world class standard that furthers intellectual agendas and also addresses the real worlds of practising managers, consumers and citizens. We will seek opportunities to develop new streams of research and research clusters that address major social challenges and that allow us to address our strategic objectives.

For example, following the philanthropic endowment of £1.4m, we are beginning the development of the *True Potential Research Centre for the Public Understanding of Finance*. This builds on our internationally recognised research on financial-decision making (**Fenton-O’Creevy, Rutterford**), financial ethics (**Frecknall-Hughes, Rutterford**), social marketing (**Dibb, Harris, Smith**) and our success in producing Europe’s largest and most successful higher education course on personal finance. Development of the centre will commence with the recruitment of a professor, research associate and funded studentships for two PhD students. The centre will raise significant further research funding as it develops critical mass.

We will also continue to grow our PhD programme and the continued development of our world-class Virtual Research Environment (VRE) for the support and development of research students wherever they are based. Preparations are underway to be part of an ESRC Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) 2016, which may include a national role based on our VRE.

**c. People, including:**

**i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

A guiding principle is to nurture a lively ‘mixed economy’ of researchers, with experienced researchers (including professors) providing mentoring and working jointly on research projects and funding bids with both mid-career and early career staff, including a cohort of dedicated research associates and fellows. The mentoring of mid- and early career staff is further supported by the recent recruitment of internationally recognised professors (**Hartley, Knights, Lawton, Wensley, Wilson**).

Newly appointed academic staff are required to meet exacting research quality standards, or to show potential to meet such standards, and their research interests are required to complement the School’s main research areas. Strategic investment of QR funds and the success of external funding bids have enabled the recruitment and development of early career researchers, and the School now has a cohort of dedicated research associates and fellows. Our commitment to the support and development of early career research staff is evidenced by our ongoing participation in the ESRC/SAMS Management and Business Development Fellowships scheme. The School recruited two Fellows in 2010 and has been awarded a further two Fellowships in the 2013 cohort.

Visiting staff include senior figures from the private and public sector, such as Gregory Butler (Microsoft Corporation Worldwide) and Cherie Booth QC, as well as those associated with public engagement in business issues, such as the broadcaster, Evan Davis.

The School takes equality of opportunity seriously. All staff are offered a research mentor, regardless of their level or experience. All full-time academics are allocated 79 days per year for research activities (pro rata for part-time staff). This can be taken flexibly, so staff can commit to large funding bids or extended research periods overseas. A twice-yearly review of research and study leave plans allows progress monitoring, planning and the provision of support and

development measures.

The University provides an extensive programme of research training and development opportunities for staff at all stages of their careers. More informal research activities, designed to support staff development and foster a lively and participative research environment, are also provided at the School, departmental and research centre levels. These include frequent seminars involving external and internal speakers; monthly informal lunchtime meetings for ‘Thinking Research Out Loud’ (TROL) where staff can discuss emerging research ideas and problems, targeted workshops – e.g. EU bidding, ‘getting published for the first time’ and media training.

Staff can gain experience of working overseas and host international visitors through our International Partnerships and Visitors’ schemes. These allow staff to spend research time in leading overseas higher education institutions or undertake joint research with international visitors (e.g. currently with the University of São Paulo involving four School staff and two visitors).

Collaborations facilitate unique comparative studies with a leading BRIC economy on subjects including knowledge management and customer management strategies. Similarly, two staff have spent research periods at the Basque University of Bilbao and four staff from this institution have spent time at the School in the last two years, which together have generated four joint research projects.

The Open University is a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (recognised by a European Commission HR Excellence in Research award). The University and the School are committed to equality and diversity in all areas of HR practice, including a commitment to the development of women’s careers and is a member of the Athena Swan Charter for women in research.

Staff are supported to develop and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct in all research activities and ‘The Code of Practice for Research at The Open University’ sets the standards for the conduct of all research within the School. All research involving human participants, including MRes and Doctoral studies, require pre-approval by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. All researchers must adhere to the recommendations of this committee.

**ii Research students**

The School has vibrant and growing research degrees programme, offering both an MRes and PhD. We do not offer a DBA or practice-based doctorate. The table below shows the number of PhDs shown in HESA figures awarded during the REF period. In addition to these, five PhDs were awarded to students who had studied at OUBS but returned to their home country just before their examination and six PhDs awarded by our Affiliated Research Centre, ESC Rennes, France.

Year	08–09	09–10	10–11	11–12	12–13	Total
PhDs awarded (HESA)	1.5	5.5	5.5	4.33	9	25.83
PhD awarded others	4	2	2	1	2	11.00

The School currently offers ten full-time studentships per year (circa £13,500 p.a. plus £2,000 p.a. research support and travel grant). Students are also funded from external sources, including private sector organisations and overseas research councils, or are self-funding. The majority of students complete a Masters in Research Methods (MRes) which provides a sound basis for doctoral studies. The MRes is a full-time, one-year, inter-faculty programme covering the main elements of research methodology and including a dissertation.

Specific projects are advertised to align with the research interests and expertise of staff. This has resulted in a critical mass of students researching topics such as corporate governance, sustainability, and power and control that align with our five research clusters. The doctoral programme attracts students from around the world, reflecting the international orientation of the School.

Support and guidance throughout the programme are offered by two full-time internal supervisors, a third-party monitor, a peer monitoring system and the Director of the Research Degrees

## Environment template (REF5)

Programme. The research and other skills (e.g. CV writing, media training) of research students are developed through a series of seminars and training events organised at University and School levels throughout the period of registration.

Part-time students represent a minority in the School but have access to the same skills training and support. More recently the School has made further specific efforts to help students to receive a wide variety of teaching experiences. These include shadowing at residential schools, inclusion in course production teams and writing course content. In addition, we collaborate with local universities and colleges to offer the opportunity for experience of face-to-face teaching. These activities are reflected in the destinations of our students post-graduation. For example, over the REF period, more than 60 per cent of our doctoral graduates have obtained academic posts in universities in the UK or overseas.

Our research students contribute substantially to the School, the University and the wider academic community. For example, in addition to involvement in School-organised seminars and events, students organise their own monthly peer-reviewed seminar series, and (together with the Programme Director) an annual PhD Colloquium. For the wider academic and business community, they have organised special sessions, public workshops and chaired special interest groups for the British Academy of Management (BAM), and presented papers at international conferences such as European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS), Academy of Management (AoM), Corporate Responsibility Research and the Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science (4S). Papers have been published, usually with support from their supervisors, in a number of internationally excellent peer-reviewed and practitioner-oriented journals.

Our student community includes a number of part-time students at other higher education institutions, such as Ryerson University, Canada and our affiliated research centre (ARC), ESC Rennes, which currently has 19 registered students. The Open University regulatory framework, bi-directional collaborative visits and training ensure equivalence (adapted to local needs) of the student experience between the two institutions. This collaboration with the ARC enlarges our PhD capacity and also provides increased international research exposure for staff and students at both institutions.

### **d. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

#### **Research income**

We have been highly successful in our strategic objective to increase external research funding in order to improve the quality and range of research projects undertaken and to promote research career development.

Over the REF period, research income has approximately doubled on a per annum basis compared with the 2008 RAE. We have broadened the range of funding sources and the majority of this funding has been awarded on a competitive basis nationally (ESRC, EPSRC, Leverhulme, British Academy, Carnegie Trust, Academy of Marketing) and internationally (EU, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada).

We have also won funding from industry and professional associations (Taylor Woodrow, BT, Santander, Friends Provident, Abdi, Shanghai Jimei International Trading Co. Ltd, Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK), Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland); and the public sector (Department for Innovation; Universities and Skills; Department for Children, Schools and Families; NHS; Department for Environment; Food and Rural Affairs; Office for Low Emission Vehicles/Department of Transport).

Consistent with our strategic objective, much bidding involves collaborations with other higher education institutions, both in the UK (e.g. Cranfield, Stirling, Edinburgh, Bristol and Sheffield universities) and internationally (e.g. Erasmus University, University of Bologna, University of Hamburg, Vrije University of Brussels, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, The Fraunhofer Institute, Università Cattolica del Sacro Coure, Comenius University Bratislava, Universität der Bundeswehr Munich). Our success with EU funding has allowed us to develop a critical mass of

staff with expertise and experience in winning and running large pan-EU projects, which they are sharing with other colleagues.

The growth in research income (an increase from £250k to £500k) is attributable to increased formal and informal support for colleagues wishing to make funding bids. This includes: regular bid writing workshops; visits from funding bodies, e.g. Leverhulme Trust, NEMODE network; seedcorn funding for activities that may lead to full research bids; formation of bidding teams of researchers with varying levels of experience; retention of an external expert in EU funding and support from researchers with experience of EU bids; monthly digest of research calls in the areas of business, management and law; and introduction of formal peer review processes for bids and monitoring of bidding KPIs relating to personal and School objectives. **Dibb** (Marketing) has just submitted a cross-disciplinary big data proposal for a research centre to the ESRC. This is an example of the step change that has occurred in the scales and scope of research bidding during the REF period.

### Research infrastructure and facilities

Core elements of the OU's research infrastructure are the development and use of advanced online technologies and its unique relationship with the BBC, both of which are used extensively and in novel ways to undertake research and to disseminate findings. Staff and research students are supported to work with staff from the BBC and independent production companies to develop programme ideas and provide academic advice. Media training is provided and colleagues are encouraged to work with a wide range of media, including traditional and online media.

Online dissemination includes preparing content for the University's significant collection of albums on iTunes U (the School has produced more than 25 iTunes U albums and has had approximately two million downloads as of October 2013) and for the University's YouTube channel. Colleagues are also encouraged to participate in interactions with research users, via social media, such as personal and School blogs and via the School's Twitter and Facebook accounts. Staff can make their research work available worldwide via The Open University's online repository, Open Research Online (ORO), which is one of the UK's largest repositories and hosts more than 23,000 peer-reviewed OU research outputs. It is visited monthly by 40,000 individuals from around 200 countries.

Staff and research students are provided with world-class research facilities. These include access to a substantial on-campus library and a full suite of online databases that include more than 85,000 academic journals, newspapers, market and economic reports, company records and leading specialist financial databases. The library service is supported by a 24-hour helpline and a full range of face-to-face and online training sessions are available. Support is provided for quantitative and statistical research via The Open University's Statistical Service. Staff and research students have access to a full range of IT packages to support research, such as NVivo and SPSS, as well as various referencing packages, such as Endnote.

### e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Increased cross-disciplinary engagement and quality of international research collaborations are key elements of our strategic objectives. Our cross-disciplinary and international research aligns strongly with our research clusters and hence reflects our areas of recognised research expertise.

#### Interdisciplinary research

Our research clusters are all highly interdisciplinary in nature. For example, social marketing research (ISM-Open) draws upon areas such as healthcare, health education, ethics, corporate social responsibility, technology, sustainability and environmental studies. A recent stream of interdisciplinary research activity relates to sustainable travel practices. **Dibb** and **Roby**'s expertise is shaping a £5 million electric vehicles project in the Milton Keynes Low Carbon Living programme, led by the Open University Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology. This research involves working with the Milton Keynes Economy and Learning Partnership, the Milton Keynes Council, Homes and Communities Agency and other institutions, to provide a research basis for informing the public engagement and social marketing strategies. **Roby** has also been awarded funding from the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) as part of a consortium led by Leeds University, for a three-year project worth £1.3 million (The Open

University share is £70,000) for research into the adoption of sustainable travel practices.

### International collaborations

The School has invested in developing and deepening research collaborations with renowned international academics and academic institutions, hosting fellows at the School and supporting our staff to undertake extended periods overseas (an investment of £160,000 over the period). To date we have hosted 17 international fellows, including staff from University of Cauca, Colombia; University of Yaoundé, Cameroon and HEC Montréal, Canada, and staff have spent extended research periods at a number of institutions, including the University of Antwerp, Belgium; the University of Alabama; the University of International Business & Economics (UIBE), China; and the University of Lund, Sweden.

We also undertake international research collaborations that support the social mission of the University and the School. For example we have a long and highly productive tradition of supporting education and education research in Africa. During the REF period we have worked with the five top business Schools in Ghana on a project titled 'Advancing Business Learning for Employability in Ghana' (ABLE-GHANA). Outcomes achieved include capacity-building workshops in the Ghanaian Schools, hosting visiting academics at the OU and providing enterprise owners in Ghana with training opportunities that they would not otherwise have been able to access.

### Collaboration with users of research

Collaboration with users of research provides benefits to the research environment that we actively harness, including opportunities for different modes of research and knowledge production and the generation of impact. In undertaking this collaborative work we actively pursue collaborations with the private, public and third sectors.

Examples of private-sector collaboration include **Storey's** high-quality and in-depth access to the Board of the John Lewis Partnership to research their partnership model; **Dibb** and **Chen's** research into Chinese consumer buying behaviour, supported by Chinese cosmetic distributor Shanghai Jimei International Trading Co. Ltd, and **Holti's** EPSRC-funded research that led to the development of short CPD courses for the construction industry (in collaboration with Manchester City Council; ISG Retail and Leisure; Balfour Beatty Construction Northern; Civil Engineering Contractors Association; and the Eric Wright Group), and for the healthcare sector (in collaboration with the Hay Group).

Collaborative work with public- and third-sector organisations includes **Storey** and **Holti's** on-going stream of work on clinical governance funded by the NHS; **Dibb's** social marketing of electric vehicles funded by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles and **Blundel's** work monitoring the 'climate solidarity' programme for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. As with the private-sector collaborations, we also undertake collaboration with international public sector organisations. For example **Budd's** EGOV4U project draws upon a Local Government consortium that includes the cities of Milton Keynes, Reykjavik (Iceland), Dublin (Eire), and Rijeka (Croatia); the Local Councils Association of Malta; ConnectMK Ltd (an SME wholly owned by Milton Keynes Council); Adepteq Ltd (a UK-based SME); and FTZ-Community Foundation (Malta).

The School has been running the *Quarterly Survey of Small Business in Britain* for 29 years. Reports are based on responses from more than 1,000 business owners and managers, and are used by government departments, businesses and academics. The findings regularly gain extensive media coverage. Funding for the survey has been provided by Barclays Bank, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and the Finance and Leasing Association.

### Journal editorship and special issues

Staff are, or have been, during the period, editors or members of the editorial board for journals including: *Journal of Marketing Management* (**Dibb**); *International Journal of e-Business Research* (**Hinton**); *Long Range Planning* (**Lawton**); *Accounting in Europe* (**Frecknall-Hughes**); *Management Learning* (**Ramsey**); *European Management Journal* (**Smith**); *Human Resource Management Journal* (**Storey**); *Organization Studies* (**Wilson**); *Leadership and Leadership & Organization Development* (**Hartley**). Staff have also acted as editors on special issues including: social marketing and social change (*European Journal of Marketing* – **Dibb**); internet retailing

(*International Review of Retail Distribution and Consumer Research* – **Ellis-Chadwick**) and British Academy of Management 25th Anniversary (*British Journal of Management* – **Wilson**).

**Seminars, conferences and conference tracks**

Staff have organised and led 48 significant conferences, workshops or tracks at major conferences including hosting the Educational Innovation in Economics and Business conference 2013 at the OU (**Reid**); hosting ISM-Open International Conference 2010 and 2012 (**Dibb, Roby** and **Harris**), the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship workshop on sustainability in 2011 (**Blundel**); and hosting a New Economic Models in the Digital Economy (NEMODE) workshop on digital entrepreneurship in 2013 (**Daniel**).

**Contribution to professional associations and learned societies**

The 2008 RAE panel noted internationally excellent engagement in advisory, planning and review bodies. We have developed this significantly. Over the period staff have had significant roles in 39 professional bodies. These include a Member of the BIS's Leadership & Management Advisory Panel and Member of Advisory Group to The MacLeod Commission (**Storey**); trustee of Alcohol Research UK and the board of the Alcohol Education Research Council, appointed by the Secretary of State for Health (**Dibb**); Member of the Expert Academic Advisory Group to the Department of Health's National Social Marketing Centre (**Smith**); Science Policy Advisory Board (**Wilson**); European Community Alcohol Forum and member of the UK Cross Party Group on Tobacco Control (**Hastings**); and Ecole Polytechnique Advisory Board (**Wilson**).

Staff have also undertaken significant roles in 32 academic societies including: founding member of the African Academy of Management (**Nyathi**); Chair and Deputy Chair of British Academy of Management (**Holloway – Wilson** is a past Chair); Secretary of Association for Research on Non-profit Organizations and Voluntary Action and member of the Council for the University Network for Social Entrepreneurship (**Paton**); Chair and Board member of the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (**Cornforth**); Board member, European Group for Organisation Studies (**Wilson**); Director of the Advanced Institute for Management (AIM), Member of the ESRC Council and Fellow of the British Academy of Management (**Wensley**); Fellow of the British Psychological Society and of the British Academy of Management (**Hartley**).

**Visiting research posts**

Staff have visiting research posts at 32 institutions nationally and internationally including University of São Paulo, Brazil and Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil (**Smith**); Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, USA and EMLYON Business School, France (**Lawton**); Koblenz-Landau University, Germany, University of Hanover, Germany (**Lindridge**); Melbourne University, Australia and Dauphine, Paris (**Wilson**); Australia and New Zealand School of Government (**Hartley**); and UNISA, South Africa (**Wright**).