

<p>Institution: University of Northampton</p> <hr/> <p>Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education</p> <hr/> <p>a. Overview</p> <p>Educational research at the University of Northampton is managed through three centres. The Centre for Education and Research (CER), under the direction of Professor Rose, provides a base for researchers investigating teaching and learning in schools, settings and post compulsory education with a particular emphasis upon the creation and management of inclusive teaching environments and social justice. The Centre for Children and Youth (CCY), a multidisciplinary research centre led by Dr John Horton, places an emphasis upon the impact of the environment and policy not only upon the lives of children in educational institutions but also in the home, the community and their social situations. The recently established (Spring, 2013) Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT), directed by Professor Ale Armellini, researches effective and innovative learning and teaching across the University and beyond. The work of these three centres enables researchers to collaborate in a strategic way on projects that provide new insights into the lives of children, young people and adults in a range of contexts and across an extended age range. Synergies in their research focus have enabled important value-added dimensions to emerge – including joint bids for funding.</p> <p>The tripartite emphasis upon inclusion and social justice, the life-experiences of children and on learning and teaching has been significant in informing educational research strategy and has resulted in outputs in each of these focus areas during the review period. Each has witnessed specific, targeted developments during the period under review, including the appointment of new research-active staff (for example Preece, Devecchi, Armellini), new Visiting Professors (Ralph, Visser, Evans), and the promotion of early-career research activity (Bell, Doveston, Hadfield-Hill). Each of these initiatives has enabled existing strengths to be enhanced and new initiatives to be developed. These actions have also been paralleled by an extended capacity to supervise PhD students in each of the three centres, with student numbers increasing from 17 to 38 during the review period. The three centres have secured the international reputation of the University in their focus areas of research. They have been actively engaged in leading on research projects worth £1.9 million since 2008. Their standing has been recognised by invitations to provide keynotes at major international conferences (for example, India, Australia, Turkey, Ireland, and Norway).</p> <hr/> <p>b. Research strategy</p> <p>Since 2008, the aim of this UoA has been to build upon the achievements of the previous ‘Research Assessment Exercise’ by a directed effort in supporting research of national and international excellence, ensuring an effective synthesis between research and teaching and engaging in applied research which supports and informs service users and the community(Note 1). The research effort across the UoA has remained sharply focussed on diverse aspects of inclusion and social justice in educational and social contexts. During the review period significant activity in each of these areas has been undertaken, resulting in outputs from each research active staff within the UoA. These have also coincided with a new University strategic plan - <i>Raising the Bar</i> (Note 2). Research within the three Centres within this UoA is aligned to the aspirations and aims of this strategic document, by emphasising “purposeful research...and social enterprise recognised around the world for its originality and impact”. This has been achieved by a consistent emphasis upon infrastructure/management development, support and guidance for early-career and established researchers, and the development of an enterprise culture which supports income generation. Each of these is integral to the future strategic direction of research within the UoA following the current review; this will continue to emphasise our work on the three core strands of activity within CER, CCY and ILT as specified under (a), above. These will also underpin the UoA’s future strategy of stimulating income generation and providing targeted support and guidance for research. This strategy has produced substantial outcomes in terms of professional development within the UoA. For example, in the wake of their collaboration on a four-year ESRC research project, Horton acted as mentor for Hadfield-Hill’s successful ESRC Future Research Leader award ES/K00932X/1 (£240,000), in order to continue and internationalise their work on youth citizenship in new-build urban communities.</p> <p><i>Stimulating income generation</i></p> <p>Researchers across the UoA have been actively supported in their efforts to increase the range of income sources, as well as their opportunities to engage in collaborative international research.</p>
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Environment template (REF5)

The strategy of forming development teams within CER, CCY and ILT who bid for funding and conduct projects by adopting a collegiate approach, incorporating timetabled opportunities for shared research bid-writing, is now well-established and has resulted in successful applications for funds: for example, Horton (ESRC), Rose (DES, Ireland).

Additional funds have been targeted towards research-active staff seeking remission from teaching in order to process data, write-up research or to engage in further research bidding (for example, Howley, Doveston).

Involvement in a range of national/international forums and organisations (for example, European Education Research Association (EERA), UNICEF, Irish Association of Teachers of Special Education, the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators) by experienced researchers from CER, CCY and ILT has enabled a major increase in successful European funding bids (5 in 2011-13, for example Framework 7, Erasmus – LifeLong Learning) and the generation of international income for funded research (Australia, Ireland, Norway). A feature of these grant successes is the allocation of new researchers to each research project (for instance, Murray in CER; Hadfield-Hill in CCY): this is intended to expand our capacity to undertake research post-2013 by developing experience in project-management amongst newly active researchers within the UoA.

Support & guidance for research

Research leadership across the UoA is provided by Rose (CER), Horton (CCY) and Armellini (ILT), with support from Garner and Pilkington. Within CER, three staff (Devecchi, Murray, and Preece) have new contracts (2013) providing for up to 75% time for research-related activity. This includes supporting new researchers across the UoA through a structured programme of mentoring and professional development. Particular emphasis has been given to further enhancing the research reputation in designated areas, some of which have already been recognised in the previous Assessment Exercise (2008); special and inclusive education (Rose, Bell, Doveston, Devecchi, Garner, Fergusson, Preece & Howley), Early Years education (Murray), Children's lives (Horton, Tucker, Hadfield-Hill, Pilkington) and Learning and Teaching (Armellini, Prior). This has been achieved by their involvement in externally-funded international research (Australia, Ireland, and China) and by its dissemination at international conferences. Active participation in international researcher networks (for example Special Interest Groups of the American Educational Research Association, British Education Research Association and the European Educational Research Association) throughout the review period has contributed to profile enhancement at an international level.

The UoA has actively sought to utilise staff development funds to support its researchers (for example, via the ILT's competitive bidding for research in learning and teaching in university-settings) and by successfully bidding for QR money within the University's REF Investment Fund (for example, to fund x3 PhD studentships in CER). Newly active researchers, as well as prospective researchers, are supported by a system of peer mentoring and by the incorporation of research targets within their professional development review (PDR) process. As a result they have opportunities to work within established externally funded projects, or to participate in bidding activity alongside more experienced research staff. An explicit function of existing (Ralph) or newly appointed Visiting Professors (Visser, Evans) is to provide support to UoA staff who are at an early career-stage in bidding for external funds.

We have sought to strategically use Visiting Professors in other ways. In special and inclusive education, all our Visiting Professors have long-standing international reputations in their designated fields of research. Professor Sue Ralph, formerly of Manchester University, provides support for research-active colleagues to engage in joint writing and support. As Editor of the *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* (Wiley-Blackwell), she is well-placed to provide holistic support across a wide range of topics in this field. Professor John Visser, formerly of Birmingham University, provides strategic support on methodological issues, particularly relating to large-scale national & international projects. His field of expertise is that of social and emotional difficulties (SEBD), and he is Editorial Board member of *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties* (T&F/Routledge). Professor Roy Evans, formerly of Brunel University, has a background in Early Childhood Development. He is the Editor of *Early Child Development & Care* (T&F/Routledge) and

provides support for research across the emergent Early Years division within the UoA. Ralph, Visser, Evans are all actively involved in PhD supervision.

Future Strategy and its implementation

The agreed research strategy within the UoA is based on a commitment to ensuring that each of the named research centres (CER, CCY and ILT) continue to develop their portfolio of research projects, attract an increasing number of well-qualified academic staff, increase the number of PhD students enrolled beyond 2013 and to build on our success thus far in securing research income. These intentions will be supported by a strategic enhancement of support and infrastructure within the UoA to promote a research-focussed activity amongst a wider range of academic staff. By these means it is intended that the profile and reputation of the University of Northampton in the specific named fields of expertise will be further enhanced.

During the review period 2008-13 research has become further embedded within the culture of those academic areas which comprise this UoA submission. Our post-2013 strategy will seek to enhance its position of increasing centrality by (a) continuing to provide resources and support to academic staff wishing to embark on research activity – for example, by full PhD fee-remission, and by financial support for attendance at methodology events (b) committing resources on an annual basis to support research dissemination (c) further emphasising the importance of research as part of professional development review (d) making further appointments of Visiting Professors who will support new researchers in the early phase of their career (e) extending participation in established networks to attract an increased number of PhD students.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

Across the University of Northampton, staff are aligned to one of the three research centres within this UoA submission (CER, CCY or ILT), although there is fluidity inbuilt to this, allowing for research cross-overs. Recruitment to each centre is based upon evidence of an interest in one or more of the research themes within the centre and of an emergent profile as a researcher (for example, Prior, Fergusson, Howley. Alongside this is a requirement to demonstrate connectivity between research activity and teaching, thus amplifying the aims of the university's strategic plan.

Each centre has its own dedicated approach towards the recruitment and support of its academic staff. CER, for example, incorporates research specialisms relating to special education and inclusion, and these have resulted in additional appointments during the review period (Murray, Preece, and Devecchi). It has also emphasised the need to secure the involvement of Research Assistants. A similar strategy is pursued in CER and ILT, with support being offered to a number of funded projects in these centres.

Staff from each centre receives strategic support for their research activity, based on an internal bidding mechanism, organised via the Education Research and Enterprise Committee (SEREC). For newly-active researchers, this provides resources to support travel to research sites, transcription costs as well as dissemination events. A feature of this approach is that individual staff beneficiaries are required to (a) report on their funded activities to colleagues within the University and (b) provide evidence that a draft version of a paper intended for subsequent publication is circulated for peer-comment & feedback (Doveston, Murray, Preece, Bell, Howley & Devecchi have all benefitted from this approach during the review period). More established researchers are similarly supported on condition that they have written papers ready for submission to peer reviewed journals (Rose, Garner, Armellini and Horton). All new academic staff are supported to attend national and international research conferences.

Newly research-active staff attend timetabled induction sessions led by established researchers and are attached to existing research projects in order that they can be supported in gaining both an understanding of the research culture within the University as well as project-specific mechanisms. Staff are encouraged to attend the generic research training provided within the University. Within the UoA, the discipline based sessions aimed specifically at education

researchers are organised on a termly basis. Within CER one experienced researcher (from Rose, Devecchi, Murray, and Preece) has been identified to support the wider research-efforts of each of the 4 Divisions. A programme of research seminars with high-profile invited speakers (national and international) provides academic staff with opportunities to engage in discussion on research matters, thus further stimulating research-awareness across the UoA.

ii. Research students

Progress during the current review period

In the period since the last Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) there has been a significant expansion in the numbers of PhD students both registering for and completing the award in all three research centres in this UoA. This has been matched by a commensurate increase in the level and quality of research students. Our approach is strategic in this regard: PhD students represent a key element in promoting a sustainable research culture and in helping to ensure credible, high-quality outputs. A total of 57 research students have been supervised within the current review periods, 44 within CER, 11 in CCY and 2 in ILT. Supervision of each PhD is managed by teams of three academic staff: in all 18 staff have participated in supervision. 3 new researchers have been supported (remission from teaching) in undertaking the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Research Supervision. The number of academic staff across all three research centres in the UoA now able to supervise at doctoral level represents an increase of 9 (doubling the number reported in 2008). A feature of our strategic recruitment has been the appointment of 3 fully-funded PhD studentships in CER (under the supervision of Rose and Garner). In CER the admission of new PhD students is monitored via a designated academic (Devecchi) and selection is made based upon the research strengths of current active researchers; it is standard practice to locate new PhD students to an informal research grouping of 3-4 other students, all of whom are researching a topic which is in some way associated.

Research Training, Support & Guidance

Since the last RAE the University has invested in the provision of improved research facilities for education research students. Purpose-built, designated rooms provide both working and social space for all research students within Education. These are located alongside the offices of experienced researchers: such spatial arrangements allow for on-going interaction between academic staff and PhD students, beyond normally timetabled supervision. All students receive an annual allowance for the purchase of essential equipment and books related to their projects.

All research students within CER, CCY and ITL are required to take an initial University-run induction course and this is followed by sessions on specific research topics provided both centrally by the University and within the Education research centres. Students are financially supported in attending both national and international conferences such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA), European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) and American Educational Research Conference (AERA). An annual two day education research student conference is organised by research students and provides a forum through which they can disseminate their own research whilst also having an opportunity to listen to established key note speakers. Each June a group of research students working in the field of special and inclusive education attend an international conference in Dublin, at which they all present papers. 2012 saw the first bilateral research seminar between the University and research students from Ireland (Dublin); this event will be continued in 2013 in Northampton. Students are supported to attend ESRC and other training courses (including those at Birmingham, London, Cambridge and Manchester universities).

All research students in Education attend a discipline based research training programme which comprises taught group sessions, individual support and bespoke sessions at the request of individuals. A monthly informal drop-in session for students and supervisors provides opportunities for students to discuss their work with their peers in a supportive environment. In addition students are encouraged to attend courses related to teaching and learning as part of their wider

professional development.

The university has a good track record of PhD completions in education. Students are supported after PhD completion by their supervisors to get their work published with many seeing their work in peer reviewed journals. Two former students (Jament, Feng Yan) in the period of this research excellence framework exercise have had books published based upon their PhD theses. One illustration of the impetus given to career progression is that all PhD completions in CCY (2008-13) have moved into posts in HEIs; 3 within CER demonstrate similar trajectories. In addition to providing support for research students whose work is clearly focused upon Education, educational researchers are involved in joint supervision of students across academic schools, with for example, the Schools of Health (Nforgwei and Tolulope Eboka – supervised by Tucker) and Social Sciences (Ryder and Hassan – supervised by Pilkington, Horton, & Tucker)

Research students have representation on SEREC within the UoA; it is responsible for steering educational research activity and the formulation of policy and strategy. They are also represented on the Social Sciences Research Degrees Board that oversees research degrees in education.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

(i) Income

The University sets annual income targets for externally-generated research funds, and progress against these is regularly reviewed both within the UoA's 3 centres and by the University's Senior Executive Team. A collegiate and strategic approach is adopted by researchers from CER, CCY and ILT in bidding for external income for projects relating to educational inclusion and social justice. It is common practice for draft proposals to be circulated to research colleagues within the centres, to enable critical but supportive feedback. Central resources (notably the Research and Strategic Bidding Office) within the University provide resources and support during the bidding phase. Annual research targets are agreed for the UoA with the University's leadership team. The UoA has secured over £1.8 million in research-related funding during this reporting period, with an additional £370,000 secured in enterprise income.

A dedicated research administrator co-ordinates bidding meetings within CER; these are further supported by an accountant who works exclusively for the UoA. All bids are overseen by experienced researchers. An archive of both successful and unsuccessful bids is maintained as a means of providing exemplars to research bidding teams. In addition, CER, CCY and ILT staff are in regular direct contact with the University's Research and Strategic Bidding Office (RSBO) in pursuing new bidding opportunities; these are disseminated to all research staff within the UoA.

Funding from research councils (ESRC AHRC/EPSRC) for example by Horton, Hadfield-Hill and Pilkington, national organisations such as the National Council for Special Education in Ireland (Rose; Devecchi and Bell) or the National College for Teaching and Leadership (Garner), from international bodies (for example, EU Framework or UNICEF by Garner & Evans) and from schooling organisations such as the National Association of Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS) (Rose), has provided a focus upon specific issues of concern to teachers, parents and young people, including transition from school to post compulsory education, mental health and children in residential special schools and children's participation in schools. Other funding sources including the Pears Foundation (Horton) and the Higher Education Academy (Tucker) have supported the continuing development of a research strategy that aims to evaluate the impact of specific procedures and interventions upon the lives of children and young people.

Rose, Bell, Garner, Devecchi, and researchers in CCY have all secured European Union funding to conduct research-related studies. These are again focussed on issues of marginalisation and exclusion. For example, Devecchi's project addresses the needs of learners who have poor attendance in school (*The Success in Schools Project* by Devecchi), whilst the *TILE Project* developed and evaluated an audit process for supporting the development of inclusive learning

environments in European vocational colleges (Bell).

(ii) Organisational & operational infrastructure

Research efforts within the UoA are concentrated within the three constituted centres (CER, CCY and ILT). Each is free-standing and managed by senior academic staff (Rose, Horton & Armellini) via the research committee (SEREC), comprising representation from research-active staff from each academic division within the UoA, PhD students, and central University research services. This group steers the strategic research effort within the UoA by periodic reviews of outputs, scrutinising and supporting research bids, disbursing devolved research funds (for small-scale pilot enquiry, attendance at research events, methodological support and disseminating research results). SEREC incorporates an Ethics sub-group, which approves and subsequently monitors ethical procedures. The research committees of each Centre reports directly to the University Research and Enterprise Committee (UREC) and to its Research Ethics Committee (REC). Each academic division within the UoA has a nominated research active colleague who undertakes both a reporting function and a catalyst for new ideas. In addition, the UoA has a designated senior colleague (Devecchi, Horton, and Armellini) to manage PhD student admissions. There is an established programme of seminars and lectures across the UoA, providing opportunities for research students to develop their skills and knowledge bases by interacting with established visiting researchers. ILT has a University-wide membership (all Schools and services) and promotes and supports research into effective and innovative learning and teaching practices across the university. ILT is a focal point for co-ordinating and implementing research into learning innovation, professional development and capacity building activities.

(iii) Research facilities

The UoA ensures that researchers at all levels have appropriate facilities and resources to conduct research. All staff have designated offices, and each PhD candidate has a work-station. CER has a specifically designated space for PhD students, which is available to researchers from the other two centres in the UoA. Access to resources (hard and e-versions) is facilitated via library services on two campuses. The ILT provides support for those research staff within the UoA who are investigating the nature and contexts of learning and teaching in higher education, whilst CER can draw on research collaboration with over 250 partner schools, many of whom having research-active practitioners in post. An important feature of the UoA's research facilities is the development of social enterprise activity, linking researchers to professional actions and enhancement of inclusive learning environments and social justice. Researchers from all 3 centres make contributions to these, including the Northampton Centre for Learning Behaviour (NCfLB) and the Forest School, both of which are social enterprises within CER, providing facilities for action-based and practitioner research.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

(i) Editorial Work

Researchers from the 3 centres within the UoA make a significant contribution to the wider research community. Several researchers (Rose, Garner, Ralph, Visser, Horton, Pilkington, Armellini) are members of the editorial boards of Journals including *The Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *Children's Geographies*, *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *The British Journal of Special Education*, *British Journal of Educational Technology* and the *Baltic Journal of Special Education*. Garner edits the peer reviewed *Support for Learning*. Researchers from all 3 centres in the UoA are regular reviewers for papers submitted to international journals, including the *European Journal of Special Needs Research*, *Compare*, *Educational Studies*, *British Educational Research Journal*, *Comparative Education Review*, *Journal of Education for Teaching* and others.

Garner is a reviewer of submissions for European Union project funding for Joint Doctorates, and for research projects offered by the Norwegian government. Garner and Rose review for the Hong Kong Research Council. In addition Rose reviews projects for the Malaysian Social Sciences

Research Council and both Pilkington and Horton have conducted ESRC reviews.

(ii) International Collaborations

Several research focused books have stimulated engagement with international scholars. Together with colleagues from Durham (UK) and University of West Virginia (USA) and over 70 contributors from 4 continents, Garner has co-edited a new edition of the *Handbook of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, and *Confronting Obstacles to Inclusion: International Responses to Developing Inclusive Education* edited by Rose. CER has collaborated with the Hong Kong Institute of Education (where Rose was Mardon Visiting Fellow, 2010-11) and with Beijing Normal University (in a UNICEF-funded study of 'left-behind' children).

Well-established international partnerships with other higher education providers including Trinity College Dublin, Leicester University, Coventry University and the Hong Kong Institute of Education and with legislative authorities and professional organisations, such as the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) have provided opportunities for research that has informed legislation and shaped policy. The partnership with Trinity College (Dublin) was successful in winning two substantial projects. The first of these, Project IRIS (Inclusive Research in Irish Schools) led by Rose, is a four year longitudinal study into special educational needs provision across the Republic of Ireland. This is the largest investigation into such provision conducted in a European country and is funded by the National Council for Special Education a division of The Department of Education and Science in Dublin and is already informing national policy and the management of provision. A further partnership project with Trinity College involves Devecchi and Bell in an investigation of transition from school to post primary provision for students with disabilities and special educational needs. Also funded by the National Council for Special Education the report from this research has been central to the implementation of new support procedures in schools and colleges.

Devecchi has negotiated a funded exchange (Santander Bank) for research students/staff within a Memorandum of understanding with Rio de Janeiro State University. Armellini's research into curriculum design with open educational resources (OER), learning innovation and building institutional capability in learning design, has significantly contributed to practice and policy at 12 UK universities, as well as a number of universities in Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and Uruguay.

(iii) Membership of National/International Bodies & Reporting Groups

Several educational researchers from the UoA have been members of national and international advisory committees, including the UK Government SALT Review of Training for Teachers of Children with Severe and Profound Learning Difficulties (Rose), the British Dyslexia Association Committee on children with specific learning difficulties (Bell) and the Australian Curriculum, assessment and Reporting Authority (Garner & Fergusson). In the Australia example, Garner is the principal investigator on the Australian project Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting in Special Educational Needs and Disability which has reviewed provision and provided advice to policy makers at both state and national levels; impact is further exemplified in a supporting case study. In collaboration with researchers from Coventry and Leicester Universities, Horton's research on pupil participation in school design has resulted in good practice guides for architects/planners and head-teachers undertaking school design, construction and refurbishment projects as part of the *Building Schools for the Future*, *Academy schools*, *Primary Capital Programme* and *Free Schools programmes* in England and Wales. Rose collaborated with colleagues in Hong Kong to conduct an investigation into the impact of training on change in practice for education assistants in a group of international private schools in the Special Administrative Region which resulted in the development of new training initiatives for paraprofessionals in this area.