

<b>Institution:</b> University of Worcester
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 25 Education
<p><b>a. Overview</b></p> <p>The submitting unit draws together researchers from across the University of Worcester (UW) including from the Institute of Education (IoE), the Educational Development Unit (EDU), and the Centre for Inclusive Learning Support (CILS). It also includes researchers from elsewhere within UW who undertake educational research (Elliott, Foskett) and pedagogic research (Peters, Prankel, Price). IoE, one of six academic Institutes, is organised into four centres: <i>Early Childhood; Education and Inclusion; Primary Education; and Secondary and Post-Compulsory Education</i>. Although these are not research centres, they act as a focus for research activity. Some research foci, however, cut across these centres (e.g. research groups with an interest and expertise in educators' professional development and identity, and reflective practice).</p> <p>The Associate Head of Institute (Research) (Woolley) plays a pivotal role in supporting the development of research strategy. He works closely with members of the Institute's Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee (RKTC), which includes research representatives from the Centres as members. The Institute's RKTC reports, on an annual basis, to the UW's RKTC and, on a termly basis, to the IoE Board. This ensures that research priorities are at the forefront of strategic planning. Researchers from outside the Institute who undertake educational research (Elliott, Foskett, Peters, Price) are included in the IoE annual report.</p> <p>EDU falls under the remit of UW's Director of Quality and Educational Development (QED) but has close links with IoE. Central to its remit is the promotion of research and scholarship in Higher Education learning and teaching. EDU staff support academics to research their own practice, thus acting as a focus for pedagogic research, whilst also undertaking their own research.</p> <p>CILS also falls under the remit of QED, a reflection of its origins as the Equal Opportunities Unit, but also has close links with IoE. Established in 2005 under the direction of Dr Val Chapman, the Centre engages in research into inclusive practice in education, with a particular emphasis on disability, and works to ensure this research has impact on current practice.</p> <p><b>b. Research strategy</b></p> <p>The University developed a 5-year Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy in 2009 establishing an overarching framework for driving forward the research agenda and informing strategy at the Institute level. The strategy has two key aims: to increase research activity across all areas of the University (specifically to ensure that all academic staff should be making an effectively shared contribution to research, knowledge transfer and/or advanced scholarship by 2013), and to develop internationally significant research centres by focusing resources on existing and potential areas of research excellence. The submitting unit's strategy has fed out of this UW strategy but has also been informed by national and international educational priorities.</p> <p>UW's research infrastructure has been enhanced (see <b>section d</b>) to support realisation of these objectives, with demonstrable success: four times as many staff are submitted to REF 2014 as were to RAE2008, across 11 UoAs (4 in 2008); a successful application for Research Degree Awarding Powers was made in 2010 (since when the number of research students has grown by nearly 20% to 104 students); external research income has grown by some 400% over the REF period to £2.1m in 2012/13.</p> <p>The submitting unit's strategy has also been shaped by the decision not to submit to Education in RAE 2008 (although submissions had been made to RAEs in 1992, 1996 and 2001). This decision was due in no small part to the retirement of a number of established researchers (e.g. Prof Tony Bertram, Prof Christine Pascal, Dr Phil Chambers, Dr Bob Fox, Dr Kate McDonald) and the appointment of others to senior posts elsewhere (e.g. Prof Geraldine Castleton as Dean of the School of Education at the University of South Australia), all towards the end of the RAE 2008 cycle. Thus a key focus of the current strategy has been to establish a sustainable research environment which supports staff at all stages of their careers to develop as researchers (and which is less susceptible to staff departures) and to grow a research culture which is vital and motivating.</p> <p>To meet the first of the strategic aims, a number of processes and mechanisms have been put in place at Institute and University level to promote and support research:</p>

- **4-year research plan:** all staff are expected to produce a rolling 4-year research plan as part of the annual appraisal process: identifying development needs, outlining planned conference presentations and publications, targeting funding applications, etc. This has led to increased research activity in IoE as evidenced through the annual report.
- **University Repository Mandate:** staff are required to upload research outputs on to [WRaP \(Worcester Research and Publications\)](#), the UW's research repository. Only uploaded outputs are taken into account at, for example, appraisal. By July 31st 2013, Education staff had uploaded 335 outputs. This is an important mechanism for dissemination of staff research.
- **Research Studentship Competition:** the UW scheme fully funds (i.e. stipend, fees and appropriate research expenses) a 3-year full time PhD project or, where a case is made, a 5-year part time PhD project. The scheme encourages staff to seek matched or co-funding from other organisations such as another HEI, a public sector organisation or a private sector organisation. The scheme has supported 43 studentships during the REF period. Staff in the unit have been successful in this competition with 3 (Parker, Peters, Kington) being awarded full time studentships focused respectively on the history of religious education in Birmingham, impact and experience of PDP in HE, and the impact of payment services on families with severe and multiple deprivation (the latter match-funded by Lankelly Chase).
- **Research and Project Leave Scheme:** the UW scheme provides staff with full or partial remission from teaching and/or other duties for a period of up to two semesters (8 months) in order to undertake research with a clear set of outcomes. Most commonly it has been used by staff to complete work on a contracted book or a number of journal articles, although the scheme also supports other activities such as field work and bid writing. For example, Parker was awarded leave to complete an edited volume (*God and War. The Church of England and Armed Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, Ashgate 2012) and a series of journal articles.
- **Vacation Research Assistantship Scheme (VRAS):** this scheme funds an undergraduate student to act as a research assistant on a discrete or on-going staff research project for a period of up to 3 months over the summer vacation. The VRA undertakes a range of activities appropriate to the project providing him/her with hands-on experience of research but also valuable support for the research lead. UW has funded 32 VRAs over the period and 6 have been awarded to staff within the submitting unit (e.g. Kington, Winson, Woolley).
- **Support for conference attendance:** all staff in IoE and other educational researchers are able to bid to a staff development budget to fund research dissemination at national and international conferences. Spending to this budget has grown significantly across the period, e.g. during 2011-12 IoE spent £21,444 on attendance for 34 members of staff at 72 events.
- **Mentoring schemes:** a number of mentoring schemes have been developed. For example: new research supervisors are assigned an experienced supervisor to mentor them through the supervision process; senior academic staff have been identified as mentors to support less experienced colleagues through the process of writing for both presentation and publication; an academic writing circle has been established, aimed at developing colleagues' confidence in their writing and highlighting opportunities to disseminate their work.
- **Funding for doctoral study:** Staff are funded to undertake doctorates (at UW or elsewhere). Six staff in IoE have completed doctorates over the period (of whom two are returned: Buckler and Messenger) while a further six staff are currently undertaking doctorates.
- **Support for staff to disseminate their research:**
  - IoE hosts a regular research seminar series which also includes notable external speakers such as Prof Lesley Saunders, Prof Dean Fink, Prof Chris Husbands.
  - It has established an educational research interest group which provides a forum for those undertaking doctoral study to discuss pertinent issues and to present on research topics.
  - IoE hosted the Research Focus Conference *Education & Social Research* in 2011, the banner under which UW presents a series of one-day conferences that bring together researchers from across the University under broad thematic headings. These events showcase the research being undertaken at UW while highlighting areas of cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary work and identifying potential areas of intersection between colleagues working in different subject areas.

- EDU (formerly the Academic Development and Practice Unit) established the [Worcester Journal of Learning and Teaching](#) in 2009 as a peer reviewed e-journal to disseminate practitioner research and to develop the confidence of new researchers in submitting to a peer-review process.

The submitting unit has worked closely with the University's Research Office to support staff in bidding for external funding. This is beginning to bear fruit and the unit is gaining success in gaining funding from major funders as evidenced by the recent award of a Leverhulme Research Grant of £219,000 to Professor Stephen Parker.

Collaboration is an important part of the research strategy and the unit has sought to develop external collaborations within the HE sector and beyond in order to facilitate research e.g.

- UW is a member of the Post-92 Research Forum, working with the West Midlands Teaching and Learning Consortium, Birmingham City, Wolverhampton, Newman, Coventry and Staffordshire Universities to establish collaborative research groups and to submit funding bids (e.g a grant of £750 from the HEA to develop a workshop on developing a research-led culture in post-92 Education departments).
- A Head of External Developments was appointed in IoE in September 2011 to develop networks and partnerships with school leaders at local, regional, national and international levels. Work to date has included with colleagues from Saudi Arabia, Canada, South Korea, Australia, the West Midlands and South West of England (Whittingham, Hanson).
- Foskett has undertaken research, funded by the EU, with Universities from the South African Development Community (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia) and the University of Southampton on capacity building in HEIs to deliver needs-led curriculum in demography in Higher Education Institutions.

The submitting unit has sought to build its capacity to supervise research students through the appointment of experienced supervisors and through the development of existing staff. Twenty staff were on the register of approved supervisors in July 2013 compared with twelve in February 2010 when the register was established. The research student body has remained stable over the REF period but there is an expectation that the expansion in supervisory capacity, together with an increased focus on research student recruitment and the launch of a Professional Doctorate in Education in 2013, will lead to an expansion in research student numbers.

A number of areas of strength have emerged over the REF period: such as special educational needs and professional identity; while a number of established areas have been consolidated: such as vocational education and training, reflective practice, professional development in HE and inclusion. Research income has increased across the period, although it has remained at a low level. Recent successes, however, mean that there is a significant increase in income in 2013/14.

The future strategy includes plans to develop more formal Research Groups. Kington has developed three such groups that focus on the areas of i) professional identity, ii) adult-child relationships in schools, and iii) children's classroom friendships. Each group has been developed over the past 6-9 months and all have started small-scale exploratory research projects, involving early career researchers from across the IoE Centres, with one group currently preparing a bid for external research funding. There are also plans to further develop the professoriate. Currently there are 4 professors that contribute to the submitting unit: Elliott (Further Education), Foskett (Higher Education) and Robertson (Education) are established professors and Parker has recently been appointed to a personal Chair in the History of Religion and Education. It is planned to advertise for an additional professor in education in the spring of 2014. The submitting unit already has a number of honorary and visiting professors (e.g. Prof Peter Pumphrey) and plans are in place to increase this number further in order to contribute to the research environment moving forward.

### **c. People, including:**

#### **i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

There are 86 academic staff in the IoE as of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013. This represents a small (8%) increase in head count from the 2008 HESA return. The percentage of part time staff has remained fairly constant (falling from 25% to 22% over the period) while those on fixed term contracts has fallen from 13 to just 6 as a consequence of a University-wide HR initiative). The percentage of

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female staff has risen from 58% to 72%. These demographics closely reflect the staff submitted here.

The University's Equality Framework 2013-18 restates its commitment to ensure that its recruitment policy encourages applications from people with as wide a range of backgrounds, skills and experiences as possible and to maintain policies and procedures in which all staff have equal opportunities to develop and progress. Thus, for example:

- The University has adopted the 'two ticks' approach in its recruitment of staff, including research staff.
- Recruitment and selection, retention and progression of staff is subject to monitoring by the UW's Diversity and Equality Committee (DEC) in relation to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. In response to the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (Principle 6), the DEC receives data for research staff.
- Stand-alone training has been provided for research leaders, utilising Vitae's *Every Researcher Counts* materials. This is being built into training for research supervisors and principal investigators.

Over 50% of current staff have been appointed during the REF period. In line with the overarching strategy to increase research capacity, there has been a clear drive to appoint established researchers to senior posts (e.g. Kington as Head of Primary Strategic Partnership, Parker as Head of Postgraduate Studies, Woolley as Associate Head (Research) and Head of Centre for Education and Inclusion) and those with excellent potential as researchers to other posts. 22 ECRs have been appointed across the period (2 in the last 12 months) and, although none are submitted here, they will be well placed for return to future research assessments through targeted support strategies. During the period, only a small number of staff who would have been part of the submission have departed (i.e. Dr Robyn Cox, now Associate Professor, Faculty of Education at the Australian Catholic University, Dr Ian Scott, now Associate Dean, Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes University) or retired (i.e. Peter Wakefield).

As part of the staffing strategy a significant number of ECRs have been appointed, who work alongside members of staff who have been appointed from practice but who have undertaken doctoral study. These ECRs are being targeted in order to increase research capacity and expertise by supporting them through research project groups and coordinating academic writing circles to develop confidence in writing. Further support for novice researchers includes the provision of drop-in sessions on doctoral study, how to begin to submit for publication, and reviewing for journals. The development of staff in a mid-phase of their research careers has also been included in the overall strategy, through which specific goals intended to progress individual members of staff from small localised projects to engagement with research of national and international significance. The role of more experienced researchers is being developed through the professorial mentoring programme to support the development of research leadership. This will support our strategy to develop a broader base of researchers that can succeed in our aspirations to develop increasingly influential, applied, inter-disciplinary research that has a positive impact on our partners, our local community and policy-makers based nationally and internationally. Key strands to consolidate staff expertise and research impact include special educational needs and inclusion, practitioner professional identity and effective practice and inspirational teaching.

The unit's approach to staff development is demonstrated in its research strategy (see above). As noted, all staff are expected to complete a 4-year research plan which identifies training and development needs. These may be met internally through training provided by the Graduate Research School (GRS) (as part of its Research Training Programme (RTP)) or through EDU. There is, however, financial support for staff to undertake external training where appropriate. As noted, staff are encouraged and financially supported to undertake higher degrees where it is appropriate for their development. Staff may apply to the University's Research & Project Leave Scheme (see above) and the University has an annual Promotion scheme that rewards research – 2 staff (Parker, Robertson) have been promoted to Professor during the REF period.

UW has implemented the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*. It undertook a gap analysis against the Concordat in 2009/10 and produced an action plan for development. It revisited this analysis in 2011/12 and developed an up-dated action plan. Key aspects include the development of a training programme for research staff; the establishment of a

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research staff forum; the principal investigator training around the commitments of the Concordat; and tracking of its research staff careers after leaving the University.

UW is committed to the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. A new ethics policy was approved in April 2013, a research integrity champion has been identified and procedures for dealing with research misconduct established. Bespoke training on ethics and research integrity was delivered to the IoE in 2012/13.

**ii. Research students**

There were 19 students within the submitting unit on Research Degree Programmes (RDPs) as of July 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 (4 full-time, two of whom are funded by UW studentships, and 15 part-time, of whom 5 are staff in IoE). There have been 10 doctoral completions over the REF period.

The GRS is responsible for the management of all Research Degree Programmes (RDPs) from recruitment to examination, for monitoring student progression, for the coordination of the research student training programme, for training and supporting supervisors, and for the day-to-day support of research students. IoE works closely with the GRS through a dedicated Research Degree Coordinator (Parker) to ensure that only excellent students are accepted onto RDPs and that all supervisory teams have the requisite expertise and experience. Teams consist, as a minimum, of a lead supervisor (Director of Studies), who is normally the expert in the field and a second internal supervisor, who, where the lead supervisor has little or no experience of supervision, will be an experienced supervisor who can act as a mentor. Many teams also draw on external supervisors when particular expertise is required (e.g. Dr Trevor Davies, Reading, Prof John Visser, Northampton). The GRS maintains a register of approved supervisors which identifies their expertise and experience. This register is reviewed annually to ensure that its supervisors are research active and up-to-date with training – the GRS offers a range of supervisor training workshops. As noted above, the number of approved supervisors in IoE has increased. In addition, a number of unit staff sit on the UW's Research Degrees Board which is responsible for approving student projects and progression through to examination – Elliott (Chair), Foskett, Parker, Woolley.

All students on RDPs are required to undertake an associated training programme. The student completes an initial training needs analysis (utilising Vitae's *Researcher Development Framework* and associated Planner) and agrees a development programme in consultation with the supervisory team. The GRS runs a full training programme including a series of generic research modules: (*Processes and Skills, Management & Methods; Publication, Dissemination, Engagement and Impact; Supporting Student Learning in HE*) and workshops (such as *Preparing for the Viva; Time Management; Drafting Your Thesis; Writing a Journal Article; Data Management; CV Clinic; Research Ethics*). IoE offers subject-specific training modules (*Research Methods in Education*) and workshops. Much of the material on these programmes is available online. These programmes are constantly being developed in direct response to student needs identified through the training needs analysis (TNA) process and through evaluation of workshops. The unit's research students also have access to external training at: the University of Birmingham's ESRC Doctoral Training Centre; Coventry University; University of Gloucestershire; CREST (see **section e**). They can access a small grants fund for support to attend external training, conferences, etc.

IoE is working with the GRS to nurture a strong, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research culture among its research students. This is achieved through the training programme and through student-led conferences and seminar series. GRS facilitates an Annual Research Student Conference and a Postgraduate Work-in-Progress seminar series, to complement the IoE educational research interest group for its students.

Research students play a vital role in the unit's research environment. They are regular attenders/presenters at IoE seminars and Research Focus conferences as well as at external events. For example, Eunice Kimaliro was a member of the organising committee in 2011 and won the prize for the best paper in 2012. Students are encouraged to publish their work in progress (and to upload this to WRaP). There is research student representation on IoE's RKTC (as well as GRS and University-level research committees) which ensures the student voice is fed into the development of RDPs and research strategy at Institute and University level.

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

##### ***Income***

The unit has been successful in applying for EU-funding. Researchers have collaborated on a number of EU-funded projects over the period: the Comenius funded Lifelong Readers Project (LiRe) (Robertson and Horton) and Guidelines for Teachers Working with Students with Medium-light cognitive impairment (GUIDE) (Woolley and Hewston) which involves research with secondary school teachers in mainstream schools; and the Leonardo-funded Professional Resources in Early Childhood Intervention: Online Utilities and Standards (PRECIOUS) (Robertson and Cox).

Other examples of funded projects include: 'Student academic failure and reassessment: policy and practice in UK Higher Education' (£10,000 funded through the British Academy Small Grants Competition) (Kington); the collaborative 'National Action Research Network for researching and evaluating PDP' (£200,000 from HEFCE National Teaching Fellowship Scheme of which the submitting unit received £38,500, Peters); two projects researching the relationship between employers and students on placement (approximately £14,000 funded by the HEA Teaching Development Grant Individual Grant Scheme, Kate Thackeray and Peter Unwin); two projects examining the use of ICT to support Music Education (£10,000 from TDA Primary Research Grant scheme, Julia Payne and Catriona Robinson) and a project funded by CfBT on Inspirational and Effective Teachers (Kington). Recently Professor Parker was successful in winning a £219,000 Leverhulme grant which will be completed in the next research assessment period (starts January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014).

##### ***Infrastructure and facilities***

UW has invested substantially in its overarching research infrastructure in the period 2008-2013. Notably, it has established a Research Office, led by a Director of Research Development and supported by a Research Support Officer. The role of this Office is to support staff in all aspects of their research development, primarily in the process of bidding for research funding. It is also responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of research governance systems to ensure the quality and integrity of the University's research. It has, for example, developed and implemented: a revised *Intellectual Property Policy*, a revised *Ethics Policy* and new *Guidelines and Procedures for Good Research Practice* (in light of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*), new protocols to support funding applications pre- and post-award. It has, also, developed a range of [web](#) and paper resources to support staff research available through the Research Portal.

The University continues to invest in its GRS, both in physical resources and staffing. GRS provides office space and IT facilities for full-time and part-time research students. Its administrative team has been expanded to support development of new RDPs (e.g. Masters by Research and professional doctorates in education, business and health sciences).

Information and Learning Services (ILS) provides library and ICT services including learning and research technologies. It also runs the institutional repository (WRaP). ILS includes a team dedicated to research support and work to a Research Services Strategy (currently being aligned to the new UW Strategic Plan). This team supports individual researchers, contributes to research student training, and works to improve access to information resources. The team also oversees a growing set of niche collections of primary resources. The Hive, a £60m joint university and public library and history centre, run in partnership by the University with Worcestershire County Council, was opened in July 2012. University researchers now have a single point of access to the consolidated county archives and Historic Environment Record as well as university library resources. The Hive offers superb opportunities for public engagement with the community on research and scholarship. Realising the potential is in the early stages, but examples of developing activity include: public lectures, collaboration with overseas archive services, and the enlargement of an already significant and wide-ranging resource centre for teachers in the region, including an extensive children's library which is utilised for research in the area of children's literature (Webb, Bigger).

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

Staff within the submitting unit are engaged in collaborative research with other universities and research organisations both internationally and nationally. Examples include: Robertson worked

with a range of European partners including the Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology (CARDET) and the University of Piraeus (Greece) on the EU-funded Lifelong Readers Project; Foskett collaborated with the University of Southampton and a number of Southern African Development Community partners on an EU-funded project 'Strengthening Training and Regional Networks in Demography'; Parker is an associate member of the University of Exeter's Religion, Spirituality and Education Network and works, publishes and co-supervises with Exeter's Dr Rob Freathy (with whom he has also made successful bids to the British Academy and St Peter's Saltley Trust) and Associate Fellow of Warwick's Religions and Education Research Unit; Kington is currently undertaking research (funded by the CfBT Education Trust) with the University of Oxford on a project looking at Inspirational and Effective Teachers; Peters collaborated with 18 other UK HEIs on HEFCE funded research to evaluate PDP.

Researchers in the unit are also involved in collaborative work across the University, for example: Bigger works closely (co-publication, co-supervision) with Jean Webb, Professor of International Children's Literature as part of the International Forum for Research in Children's Literature.

The submitting unit and UW have established a number of collaborations in the HE sector to support research. UW has a longstanding strategic partnership with the University of Birmingham which has facilitated a number of research collaborations resulting in joint bids, seminar series, jointly funded studentships and joint supervision. Research students from the unit also have access to Birmingham's ESRC DTU through this partnership. Joint Innovation days have been run with Coventry University, the University of Gloucestershire and Buckinghamshire New University to which academic staff are invited, the purpose of which is to identify opportunities for collaboration in research and knowledge transfer. These events led to the establishment of an Annual Applied Research Competition (for staff and research students) involving Worcester, Coventry and Buckinghamshire Universities and were also instrumental in the development of a PhD studentship competition jointly funded by Worcester and Coventry. The University is a member of CREST (the Consortium for Research Excellence Support and Training) which brings together researchers from 20 member universities and which facilitates collaborative activity both face to face, through its annual symposium and a programme of research events and seminars, and virtually via an online community built around a series of interdisciplinary research groups (including one in Education).

The submitting unit also has a number of research collaborations with the voluntary sector and other users of research. For example: Education has recently established a collaboration with the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) which will lead to jointly funded PhDs and joint bids

Staff within the unit are engaged in activities which contribute to the discipline/research base. These include:

- Membership of editorial boards: e.g. British Journal of Music Education (Hewston); the International Journal of Music Education (Hewston); Biologist (Howarth); School Science Review (Howarth); Journal of Beliefs and Values (Parker); Practical Theology (Parker); Review of Education (Kington, Associate Editor); Journal of Post-Compulsory Education; Journal of Critical Education Policy Studies (Woolley).
- Academic fellowships: e.g. Teaching Fellow, Imperial War Museum London (Woolley); Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (Parker, Woolley); Fellow of the Royal Society Arts (Hewston; Parker); Visiting Farmington Fellow at Harris Manchester College, Oxford University (Brown); Fellow of the College of Teachers (Kington); Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society; Fellow of the Society of Biologists (Howarth); Research Fellow in Palliative Care, University of Coventry (Brown).
- Journal/Grant reviewers, e.g. Cambridge Journal of Education (Kington); Journal of Mixed Method Research; School Improvement (Kington); Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice; Teaching and Teacher Education; the International Association for Scientific Knowledge; ESRC Peer Review College (Kington).