

Institution: University of East London

Unit of Assessment: 19

a. Overview

The UEL Royal Docks Business School (RDBS) was established in 2009 to provide a new organisational foundation that strengthens our academic core and better supports our research plans, recognising research as a mainstream activity. Business Studies at UEL has a long tradition of consultancy, training and knowledge transfer, working with the local business community. The aspiration of the University is to build on this engagement, establishing the School as a world-class research unit. UEL's first ever submission to *Business Studies* confirms UEL's commitment to the upward trajectory of the School under the direction of a new Dean. Enacting the *University Research Strategy* we have invested in over 20 new staff from leading research universities and Business schools in the UK such as Manchester, Durham, Imperial, Exeter, Essex, Birmingham, and LSE. The vast majority of these new academics are research active and many hold PhDs, but they are also relatively inexperienced. For REF2014 we submit a talented core of four outstanding academic leaders including 1 Reader and 3 Senior Lecturers, who are setting the pace for the School, and providing leadership and guidance to our new ECRs.

Research has been recently restructured into six new research clusters: **Accounting; Economics, Finance and Risk (EFR); International Business Management (IBM), Human Resource Management (HRM), Marketing; and Tourism, Hospitality, & Entertainment Management (THEM)**. There are a number of key themes that run across these research clusters and reflect the broader commitment of the School and unit to questions around identity, culture and context for analyzing and understanding questions concerning the workplace, markets and performance of firms. The unit contributes to the UEL Research Themes of *Social Equality and Justice, Human Rights and Security and Politics, Culture and Society*.

Going forward the research in the School/unit will be further enhanced by the formation of four UEL accredited Research Centres that will provide a focus for the School research and knowledge exchange activities. After rigorous scrutiny of business and research plans UEL recently approved our first research centre, the UEL *Centre for the Study of States, Markets and People (STAMP)*, and three other new centres are proposed; with two underpinned with significant donor support that we plan to transform from external engagement centres to research centres in the coming years: the *Noon Centre for Equality and Diversity in Business*, the *Centre for Islamic Finance and Banking*; and the *Centre for Innovation Management and Enterprise*.

b. Research strategy

This unit was not submitted in the RAE 2008 and our aim has been to create a new focussed academic core and to begin to build this new area of research at UEL. We have pursued four strategic aims:

- i) to attract high quality research staff;
- ii) to enhance our research culture;
- iii) increase engagement and sponsorship with external stakeholders;
- iv) to build our academic output and reputation.

i) Attract high quality staff

In line with the *UEL Research Strategy* we have invested in developing a strong academic research core by making 20 research-oriented appointments: including one interdisciplinary professorship (Fouskas) appointed to build future work; a number of other senior appointments (e.g. **Karathanasopoulos**, Lutz, Taticchi, **Poulis**); and a number ECRs at the lectureship level. These appointments have strengthened areas of expertise particularly in **Economics, Finance and Risk (EFR); and International Business Management (IBM)**. This influx of new staff has contributed to the development of a new, dynamic, research culture, which is also impacting on longer-standing academic staff (see staffing strategy), who are developing and strengthening their research profiles. The School is also supporting a number of staff in the pursuit of doctorates at top Business Schools such as Henley, Cranfield, Ashton and Surrey.

ii) Enhance our research culture.

We have made significant progress in developing a sustainable research culture that can support our research vision and further develop our research activities. We have a number of research activities established on the School calendar. The School organises research seminars under the various centres that have been established in the School such as Islamic Finance series and Women in the Board Room Series. We also have a seminar series each semester where 6-8 of our academics present current research projects for feedback. We have also hosted a number of conferences on topics such as feminist theory, ethnic relations and the green economy. We have introduced a Masters speaker series at the postgraduate level that takes place each semester. At least 10 of such seminars are organised per academic year, with speakers from the academy and industry. Other activities, include Undergraduate Research Internships (supported by the central UEL funding), a UEL-wide scheme where undergraduate students work on a 10 weeks research project, a yearly PhD candidate research conference, and the UEL annual research conference. The centre and each cluster arrange and have their own meetings and events. The School has a newsletter specifically devoted to disseminating research-related news items as distinct from the monthly general School newsletter. This research newsletter is used for sharing information about research and knowledge exchange activities of members of staff, such as recent publications of staff members, work-in-progress, funding opportunities, calls for papers, and other research-related news items. Furthermore, the School, as well as each of the centres, produces an annual report that highlights the staff publications, conferences, seminars and scholarly accomplishments of this unit.

iii) Increase engagement and sponsorship with external stakeholders

Under the direction of the Dean, RDBS has established four centres with two that are supported by external stakeholders (*Noon Centre for Equality and Diversity in Business* is funded by a generous donation from the Noon Foundation and the CIME is funded by a donation from the Molex Corporation and Martin Slark, CEO Molex). These centres are business and student facing however, the intent is to develop them in the coming years as research centres with a focus on policy and working paper series associated with the various centres. The *Centre for Islamic Finance and Banking* has also received a generous donation from the Islamic Research Training Institute (IRTI), Islamic Development Bank, of academic books on Islamic Finance and Banking to add to the library collection. The STAMP centre is newly established through the University as a research centre. It is the intent that all these centres will not only contribute to developing a thriving research culture in the School, but continue to foster external engagement with various stakeholders.

These centres will also continue to be the focus for developing cross disciplinary research in the School as well as business interaction. The Dean will also continue to pursue donor funding for the activities in the centres as well as the sponsorship of research chairs associated with the key themes in each centre. The Chairs will be in line with the key strategic areas of the School both in terms of fields, research centres and executive education. We have also strengthened our business engagement with the relaunch of our Business Advisory Board, which we are planning to expand to support the development of our research culture.

iv) to build our academic output and reputation

To foster the development of world-class output in the School, we have encouraged and recognized different types of publications and forms of involvement in research such as publications that are academically rigorous as well as those that are focused on professionals in a particular field. This particularly comes through with the work by Fouskas and Lutz. Fouskas' work spans academic journals as well as a wide range of commentaries and articles in more popularized publications such as *openDemocracy*, *The World Today* and is a regular columnist in the largest Cypriot daily *O Politis* (The Citizen). Lutz has worked on a number of projects for the International Centre for Economic Research (ICER) as well as a number of projects in economic consulting for various international organizations. We have also communicated clear research expectations particularly in relation to supporting career progressions in the school based on research output. A key aim has been to ensure that research projects undertaken in the school are published in journals with respectable impact factors in terms of Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and/or are recognised on the Association of Business School (ABS) list. Members are publishing

in International and World-Leading journals in their respective fields such as **Chandler**, *British Journal of Management*; Lutz, *Journal of Common Market Studies*; Gbadamosi, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*; Bianchi, *Tourism Management*; **Sheikh**, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*; **Karathanasopoulos**, *European Journal of Finance*; Taticchi, *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*; and **Poulis**, *International Marketing Review*. We have also encouraged and assisted staff in getting involved in editorial activities as permanent members of the editorial board of a peer-reviewed journals (see e).

Future Strategy

In line with the University's research strategy, Royal Docks Business School aims by 2020 to be recognised internationally for the quality and impact of its research in the broader fields of enterprise, diversity and ethnicity, sustainability and finance. Our strategic vision is to be one of the leading national and international sources of expertise in these key areas and play a role in enabling the University to develop an international reputation for its ground breaking research in pressing questions and issues of business and globalisation. We have five aims:

- i) support our mid-career research active staff to further develop their research;
- ii) further increase our research outputs by mentoring and developing ECRs in the School;
- iii) increase the generation of external research and knowledge exchange income;
- iv) establish a critical and healthy mass of postgraduate research students;
- v) obtain AACSB and AMBA accreditation.

i) Supporting mid-career staff to develop their research

Embracing the university's research strategy to develop each generation of researchers, we plan to introduce opportunities and support for mid-career research active staff as we have done for early career staff. In particular, we plan to support our staff to improve their grant writing skills as well as provide UEL funding schemes especially for mid-career research active staff. We have already had the European Case Study Clearing House come into the School and offer a day long seminar for staff on case writing and presenting. We also currently fund seven staff members in Ph.D. programmes with five of these candidates pursuing degrees outside the institution. We are also looking to develop a sabbatical scheme for these mid-career researchers and already allow staff to structure their workload allocation to support research engagement.

ii) Mentoring and developing ECRs in the School

We aim to further support and development of ECRs. We are identifying opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration within and outside UEL to assist them in maximising their research potential. We will strengthen our expertise in key areas by encouraging research clusters to have regular staff seminars. All ECRs have been assigned research mentors. Some of these mentors are across the institution. The research clusters have also identified key themes that they will focus on as a group in terms of collaborative research outputs and funding such as IBM focusing on sustainability and SMEs, EFR on financialisation and globalisation, and HRM, equality and diversity in the workplace.

iii) Increase external research and knowledge exchange income

We will effectively utilise the existing UEL system to receive support for research bids to funding bodies by strengthening our relations and collaboration with the Research and Development Support (ReDS) team and other relevant teams at UEL. We will support the development of the skills of our staff to increase success rates for external grant writing. We will support best practice and we will build a repository of successful grant applications that will be available to our staff. We will also support the increase participation of our staff to funding councils related activities through memberships to evaluation panels, reviewing activities and engagement on relevant events. The School already has a history of participating and securing EU funded projects as well as consultancy related projects with local businesses. These projects have often had an education and training focus. In the future, we would like to focus more on not only providing training, but knowledge exchange through our research projects. The number of grant submissions has grown exponentially in the School in the last year, but the success rate of these proposals is still poor. We are currently working with staff through engagement with the University support team to get

academic staff working further ahead on developing research proposals as well as identifying successful proposals and approaches to grant participation.

iv) Establish a critical mass of postgraduate research students

We plan to develop clear routes from BSc to PhD in research areas where we have demonstrated strength, to provide opportunities and appropriate preparation for our BSc/MSc graduates to engage in research degrees by ensuring that our programmes are delivering the theoretical, methodological and analytical skills that ensure success at the doctorate level. We aim to develop our research culture to improve the inclusion of BSc and MSc students through internships and research-based projects, whilst simultaneously broadening the base of our PhD supervisory teams. We also plan to ensure that our Ph.D. candidates are a focus of the research culture in the School going forward by offering them conference support as well as fully integrating them into the staff research clusters. We have already begun to include them in research seminars, conferences held on campus and hiring them as research and teaching assistants in the School.

v) Obtain AACSB and AMBA accreditation

As a School, we are in the process of pursuing AACSB accreditation. We see this process as part of our journey of ensuring excellence in how we ensure the quality of our academic staff. We have completed our eligibility application and now are in the process of aligning our practices to the AACSB standards. We believe that the benchmarks and practices that we are required to put in place to meet the AACSB standards will assist us in creating a better business school and research culture where over seventy percent of our staff are academically qualified and the remaining staff are professionally qualified. We are working towards a School where every staff member is research active. We are also undertaking a complementary process with AMBA in obtaining this accreditation for our MBA and M.Sc. International Business programmes.

c. People, including:

i) Staffing Strategy and Staff Development

Our staffing strategy has been informed by a set of basic principles: Research ability, research fit to existing groupings, and existing research record and/or potential, along with terminal degrees in a related field to the post, are important factors in our recruitment and selection process. Since 2010, in order to support our goal of enhancing our research culture, appointment of colleagues with PhD qualification or equivalent is pursued as a minimum requirement for all new appointments, with evidence of an active programme of output production as desirable for ECRs. As part of our staff retention and development strategy, once appointed, staff member's teaching loads and administrative duties are assigned in a collegial process, where research time is a key consideration. Given our pursuit of AACSB accreditation, all staff in the School are considered to be research active. Correspondingly, the deployment of staff and hiring strategy in the School is mindful of the need to maintain this balanced approach across the various fields. A research mentor is assigned, on newly appointed staff, advising on publication, the development of a funding portfolio, and general research career progression. Our strategy is to ensure that every member of staff is able to organise their time and commitments so they have around two days a week, during semester, time free from any teaching, or administrative tasks. We do not allow ECRs to take on course (programme) leaderships until they have learned to balance the teaching with research and have produced a critical mass of publications. Further adjustments are made in cases of promotion or grant awards to enable staff to fulfil their research objectives.

The majority of staff members have their own offices and all staff have their own networked computers with relevant software for their research and teaching needs. In addition, staff have been supplied with specialist hardware and software for specific research project work. We also have a designated room with Bloomberg terminals (16) and other data processing software and sets for staff and students to use. We also have laptops that staff can be assigned when travelling to conferences or engaging in fieldwork. We use and supply all staff and students teaching on Postgraduate programmes with iPads for research and pedagogy.

Staff can benefit from a large set of training opportunities delivered by UEL in research skills training and professional development. Several staff have attended training courses related to

securing grant funding, writing research papers, effective supervision and consultancy and knowledge exchange training.

Career Development Support

The University's Staff Development and Review (SDR) scheme with its annual reviews for all staff includes personalized identification of research goals and training needs and a personal development plan agreed with the relevant line manager. Several members of staff in the School are currently undertaking doctorates with the school supporting payment of fees. Doctoral studies are taken into account when setting staff workloads.

To develop UEL researchers across their careers the *UEL Researcher Development Programme* offers a wide range of skills development workshops and on-line resources designed to meet the needs of research-active staff and postgraduate research students. This training curriculum uses the *Vitae* framework and is designed to help UEL meet the UK Concordats for researcher development and integrity. UEL has recently been awarded the *HR Excellence in Research Award*.

New research active members of staff are provided with opportunities, from early on, to participate on PhD supervision teams in conjunction with more experienced colleagues once they have demonstrated a critical mass of publications. All research student supervisors receive regular update training. ECRs are eligible to apply for the UEL Early Career Researcher Accelerator Fund, awards up to £10K for each proposal. RDBS has had three ECRs benefit from this programme in the past year.

The Research and Development Support (ReDS) team provides UEL with a one-stop-shop service for supporting all aspects of academic research and knowledge exchange funding including consultancy and tenders. Internal School and University funding opportunities, including the Research Development Fund, (administered by ReDs), Alumni Start-up research grants, and the Undergraduate Research Internships scheme, are available to support all research active staff, in their primary research, in attending conferences and engage in external research activities, and in preparing research proposals. Such funds have been focussed on achieving research outputs that can be submitted to the REF, but will continue after this exercise.

Furthermore, the university has a staff sabbatical scheme to support development opportunities for individuals across the University by advancing their pursuit of research activity. One full sabbatical was awarded to RDBS staff in Semester B 2013 (Kelly) while 11 projects from RDBS have been funded through the Undergraduate Research Internship scheme.

Staff are encouraged and supported to apply for opportunities to progress their careers. Staff on fixed term research contracts are supported to apply for full time academic posts while staff on full time posts are eligible to progress their research career through the University's annual promotion round for Reader and Professor.

Equality and Diversity

We are committed to equality and diversity, from the recruitment process to everyday support provided to our diverse staff. We have made significant number of appointments of staff originate from at least 20 different countries. Our staff benefited from flexible working hours and paternity leave and the University is fully committed to the Athena Swan initiative.

li) Research students

Since 2008, the School has had 12 completions of doctoral degrees, and there are currently 22 doctoral students associated with the School. Our PhD students are a significant and integral part of the unit's research environment. Each student is allocated, at time of enrolment, a supervisory team, which consists of at least two members of staff with research knowledge and expertise related to the student's research project. Student progress is monitored through well-established events, including annual reviews and minuted supervisory meetings, and a list of important milestones including registration and transfer.

All students have access to all university facilities, including a 24/7 library, and to a dedicated research student room with networked computers, printed facilities and phone links. The School also supports its PhD students to achieve an all around academic profile by providing funding for PhD students to attend internationally recognised conferences when they have an accepted paper and by providing opportunities for part-time teaching. PhD students need to attend two taught modules related to research methods and research development. Moreover, there are various training opportunities provided by the School as well as the University's Learning and Development

unit. RDBS has employed a Research Degrees Leader along with an administrator who works alongside the Leader to ensure that student related needs are taken care of. There is also a Research Degrees subcommittee to take decisions on applications, monitor student progress and manage the process of formal transfer onto the PhD programme. All staff and student research projects are required to gain approval through the University Ethics Committee. The Research Degrees Leader also submits regular reports to the School Board each semester.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income: Given the recent establishment of the School and restructuring that has taken place, the pursuit of funding opportunities is picking up rapidly. In the past year, we had grant applications to the EU, ESRC, Leverhulme Trust and EU Tempus. In total in 2012-2013, we have had £935,997 of funding requests from 13 proposed projects. Andre Mostert received funding from the UKIERI British Council of £20,000 for a project on fashion education that involved embedding social enterprise in 2013. We have also initiated in the School a ECRs seminar series on how to successfully get research grant funding and build collaborative teams. This series involves inviting research directors from other Business Schools in to speak. Given how new the unit is, much of what we are doing is building capacities by supporting the development and submission of applications so that researchers in the School can get the critical feedback they need to apply and in many cases reapply for funding for proposed projects. Therefore, we expect that over the coming five years, we will secure a number of grants as we work with our staff to particularly aim for those from national councils. In the meantime, under the direction of the Dean, the School will continue to look to external stakeholders and donors as a means of funding much of the research activity in the School.

Infrastructure & facilities: The unit has developed an infrastructure and a set of facilities to support its day-to-day operation. In particular, we have control of a specialised computer room that not only hosts 16 Bloomberg terminals, but has a number of PCs loaded with specialized software for data analysis such as data monitoring. We have also purchased a number of quantitative software packages for specialized research such as STATA 13 SE, Scientific Workplace, Matlab with stats and curve fitting features. The investment in specialized software has allowed our researchers to expand the quantitative dimension of the research being conducted in the School. Currently, we have a number of projects that depend on these tools such as one on the effect of taxation on European multi-national financing and profits and two on real-time stock trading and returns. We have created a dedicated postgraduate office/room that is well equipped with computers, desk space and a discussion area, creating an attractive environment for our growing body of research students from across the School. The postgraduate space is located in close proximity to the academic staff offices to create synergy and presence with our doctoral students and staff. Three of the four centres in the School host dedicated space for research visitors and academics engaged in projects through these centres. A room/lounge facility has also been dedicated for staff where irrespective of the research group or research areas, can meet and discuss research. We are constantly making an effort to improve our facilities and an assessment of our current facilities and needs are currently being compiled.

School research governance, practice and policy:

Research governance, rigour and integrity are integral to the school and, monitoring is overseen by supervisory teams, annual review teams, the School Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, School Board and SMT and supported by the Graduate School, Research Development Services Office, and Quality Assurance office. All PGR and staff research proposals are independently scrutinised by the School and University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which has specific responsibility for institutional oversight of matters relating to ethics and governance in research that involves human participation, personal sensitive data or human material. UREC's membership is multi-disciplinary, from across our academic schools and research institutes, alongside non-research lay members. The structure for RDBS is strategically linked to the overall structure of research and knowledge exchange of the school. A member of staff in each of the research clusters takes a leading role to engender research in the subject area and represents the unit in the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of the school,

chaired by Gbadamosi. This arrangement makes the school's Research and Knowledge Exchange committee very inclusive and representative of all areas of inquiry in the School. This organisation has proved successful in generating a research culture in the School since its introduction in September 2012 as evident in staff members' research outputs and renewed interest in research.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

Collaborations: Research links demonstrate our international reputation, which enjoys active research collaboration with some of the world leading academic and industrial groups in the UK and abroad. A significant development initiated by RDBS has been the creation of the Organisation Studies Network (OSN) that provides an opportunity for both new and established researchers, from PhD students and lecturers presenting their first paper or Chairing their first session, to established Professors, to mix together, share thoughts and present their research in a critical, scholarly and supportive environment. The OSN has attracted academics and researchers from some 20 universities including the Universities of Lancaster, Leeds, Durham, Essex, Keele, Cardiff, Hull, York and Leicester. Meetings of the OSN have been held at UEL, Staffordshire and Keele Universities, with a further meeting held in May 2013 at Liverpool Hope University.

RDBS has also initiated cooperation with the University of Staffordshire and Luleå University (Sweden) in running the annual International Dilemmas in Human Services Research conferences (Dilemmas) in association with another RDBS visiting appointee, Professor Mike Dent. Arising from developments in international networking and collaborative research, two members of staff have presented their doctoral thesis at Luleå University in Sweden and another is currently registered, whilst another holds an appointment of Visiting Professor. RDBS has established formal links with Luleå University in Sweden through the appointment of RDBS Visiting Professor Elisabeth Berg.

A number of our researchers are engaged in projects with other scholars and professionals. Taticchi is currently collaborating with Professor Kashi Balachandran, NYU Stern School of Business on Sustainability Measurement and Reporting; Professor Flavio Tonelli, University of Genoa and Professor Steve Evans, University of Cambridge on Business Models for Industrial Sustainability; Professor Cristiano Busco, Babson College on Financial Benefits of Six Sigma. He was also a visiting scholar at the Stern School of Business during 2009-2010. Nwankwo is the Chair of the Board of Governors for the International Academy of African Business and Development. Fouskas has been a Visiting Professor at Isik University in Istanbul and is a member of the Scottish Peace and Conflict Network at the University of St. Andrews.

Editorial work: A number of our staff are involved in editorial work. **Poulis** is on the Editorial Board of *Journal of Business Theory and Practice* and *International Journal of Business and Systems Research*, and Editor-in-chief of a peer-reviewed journal or book series; Foukas, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*; Gbadamosi, *Business and Economics Journal*; Bianchi, *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* and *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Heritage*; Nwankwo, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *Journal of African Business*, *Journal of International Marketing and Exporting*; Taticchi, Guest Editor, *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research*, *International Journal of Accounting and Information Management*, *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*; and Nora Colton, Series Editor, *Economics and the Middle East*, Palgrave-MacMillian. We have also established a data management plan for the School in terms of utilizing research management software to manage our staff research output and contributions overtime.

Fouskas has also worked with other academics on a number of edited books, *The Politics of International Political Economy* (2013) Routledge, and *The Politics of Conflict* (2009) Pion Publishers. Nwankwo and Gbadamosi co-edited a book, *Entrepreneurship Marketing: Principles and Practice of SME Marketing* (2011), Routledge. Taticchi has been an editor with Paolo Carbone on *Corporate Sustainability* (2012) Springer and *Business Performance Measurement and Management*, 2010, Springer