

**Institution:** Leeds Trinity University

**Unit of Assessment:** Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism

**a. Overview**

Leeds Trinity is a new, small University with approximately 135 academic staff and a student population just over 3,000FTEs (full time equivalents). The student population is predominantly undergraduate, and there are currently 136 taught postgraduate and 7 postgraduate research students. This small size enables us to work across discipline boundaries, which is particularly seen in our flagship interdisciplinary research centre, the Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies. The institution is committed to the 'creation of a strong research culture' while being 'student-centred at all levels' (Strategic Plan, 2013/14). It has a record of sustained engagement with Research Assessment Exercises from 1992 onwards.

The period 2008-2013 has been one of dynamic and rapid institutional change. At the point of the RAE 2008 the institution was still a College of Higher Education, and its undergraduate and postgraduate degrees were awarded under the aegis of the University of Leeds. The institution received Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2009 and gained University status in December 2012. During this period the institution has remained committed to sustaining research excellence and to its primary aim of developing the breadth of research activity (Research and Scholarship Strategy, 2006). As a result, there are 2 new Units of Assessment being submitted for REF 2014 (which did not submit in 2008), an increased number of individuals being submitted, and more than twice as many registered doctoral students (7 as compared to 3). During this period the University's research culture has been enhanced, enriched and expanded within the wider context of a community characterised by inclusiveness and the commitment to being student-centred. Research is the institution's 'intellectual capital' and that capital is for the 'benefit [of] our students in the wider community' in an institution that aims to contribute to local and international community partnerships (Strategic Plan, 2013/14). Its academic provision, which has always been characterised by a particularly high level of vocational focus underpinned by professional practice, is now also to be 'research-led and research-informed' (Strategic Plan, 2013/14).

The department of Sport, Health and Nutrition (SHN) has expanded over the last 4 years from 13 academic staff and 1 Technician to 18 academic, 2 sport development staff and 1 Technician. The staff team is relatively 'young' in terms of their academic career and research, with 6 staff having completed a PhD, 6 staff in the process of doing a PhD, and 2 staff looking to start a PhD during 2013-14. Thus, a third of the department have a PhD all of which are keen and looking to start PhD supervision where feasible (further detailed under section b).

Of the 18 academic staff, the department covers the multi-discipline area of sport with the following staff and discipline: 2 Sport Sociologists; 2 Sports Physiologists; 1 Performance Analyst/ Biomechanist; 1 Sport Psychologist; 2 in Sport Development; 3-4 in Physical Education; and 1-2 in Physical Activity & Health. In addition, to Sport, there are 2 in Health and 3 staff in Nutrition and Food. With this, the research has the potential to be wide ranging whilst also having potential areas for overlap across disciplines and areas. Details of how staff are working collaboratively internally and externally are provided in section b.

The REF 2014 is the first year that SHN have put forward a submission to a research exercise framework, clearly showing advancement from the RAE 2008. Three staff are being put forward for this unit, covering the areas of Physical Activity and Health, Biomechanics and Sports Psychology. The department is ambitious and have set targets for development ahead of the next research assessment period, 2020.

**b. Research strategy**

As a result of the institutional change described, Leeds Trinity has undergone a degree of restructuring, which has necessarily impacted on some of the roles described in the institution's Research Strategy 2006-2011. During this process, research became embedded within the staple business of the institution. For example, Heads of Department gained responsibility for aspects of research leadership that had previously resided solely at senior management level, in the Director of Research, while the Faculty Research Champions created by the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund became Research Leads within Departments. The submitting unit has utilised this devolved structure and worked towards creating a submission for REF2014.

Since gaining University status, the institution has appointed a Vice-Chancellor (from Jan 2013) and a Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) (from Sept 2013). These appointments have led to a revised Strategic Plan (2013/14) and a bold and ambitious ten-year research strategy (to 2022). A stated objective of the Strategic Plan (2013/14) is that the institution's research capacity will be increased. This is supported by the Research Strategy's overarching aim to create a strong, vibrant and sustainable research culture that underpins our teaching, enables research excellence and enhances our academic reputation and credibility. Projected plans in the Research Strategy are to stimulate research partnerships and networks regionally, nationally and internationally, create research leadership and co-ordination roles and, subject to clear procedures and protocols, establish new research groups and centres. A key objective of this strategy is to lay the foundation for the application for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) by 2022, plans and targets for which are outlined in 3-4 year periods (the current period being 2013-16). Details of how the institution will work towards this over the next four years include: revision of academic staff appointment procedures to ensure only research-active staff are appointed to academic roles; providing funding (level of which will be agreed on an annual basis) to recruit and support the progression of postgraduate research students; seeking at least one externally-funded PhD research studentship for each internally funded studentship; and creating the post of Research Officer to provide institutional support for grant administration.

The department of SHN has responded to the institutional research strategy with a number of actions: developing a departmental Research Plan; appointing a Research Lead for the department to organise research seminars, develop and support collaborations within the department and externally, and support early career researchers; and encouraging staff to disseminate their research at conferences and via publications. Currently there are internal staff collaborations between Nutrition and Health staff. In addition, staff are working collaboratively externally in Sport Psychology, Sport Development, Physical Activity and in Nutrition (not including the external PhD supervision where staff are working in a number of different institutions). This has led to the outputs of staff who are being submitted to the REF 2014 but will also enable the research developments over the next submission period.

As a teaching-led, research informed (new) University, staff within SHN, between 2008 and 2013, have been active within research that has largely informed their teaching. The department runs a series of research seminars that are open to all staff within the department as a means of sharing and disseminating research and to foster a research culture. Over the next 5 years, the Research Lead will support staff research as noted above and those staff who are in a position to co-supervise PhDs are seeking to recruit research students to help the institution achieve RDAP as elaborated further in section cii below. In addition, to expanding postgraduate provision, funding bids will be sought to help resource departmental research activities.

Current strengths within research are in: Sports Psychology; Biomechanics; Physical Activity, Nutrition and Health. Growing research areas for the department, in addition to current strengths, are within Sport Development and Policy; Organisational Health; Student Employability; and Gender, Physical Activity and Health. Two members of staff have been awarded the University Research Fellowship for 2013-14, with the ambition that annually staff within the department will bid for and be successful in gaining Research Fellowships to help support and develop the department's research profile.

**c. People, including:**

**i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

The Leeds Trinity HR Staff Development Strategy identifies Research and Scholarship as one of its priority areas. This includes the objective 'To support the Strategy for Research and Scholarship by increasing staff expertise and experience in research and scholarship', elaborated in three actions: '(I) Ensure that academic staff who are involved in research are supported in carrying out this role effectively, by providing a programme of staff development activities designed to build research competencies. (II) Establish a mentoring system for early-career academic staff. (III) Provide support for staff undertaking research degrees through the provision of partial funding.

The institution is committed to equal opportunities in the recruitment and support of research staff. The HR Staff Development strategy addresses equality and diversity in objective 2: to embed the principles of equality and diversity, which underpin the institution's vision and values, into all actions of the institution's work. The institution works towards achieving this through three actions: I) increase the capacity and confidence of staff, especially those with managerial or supervisory responsibilities, to manage increased diversity within the staff and student bodies, by providing a range of development opportunities aimed at raising awareness of equality and diversity issues; II) facilitate legal compliance by providing mandatory threshold-level equality and diversity training for all staff; III) ensure legal compliance in recruitment by providing mandatory equality and diversity training for all members of recruitment panels.

After RAE 2008, as part of an initiative to maximise staff research engagement, the annual Professional Development Reviews (PDR) was revised to incorporate focused coverage of research and scholarship plans in place of the optional individual Research and Scholarship Plans used before. This process also highlights staff development needs with regards to research. These reviews are reported back to HR via line managers. There are clear procedures for career progression of staff, including clear criteria for applicants seeking a Professorial title or Readership.

The policy for research leave is that every member of lecturing staff has an automatic right to 20 research days a year. In addition, Leeds Trinity operated a competitive scheme for research leave (known variously as the Research Leave Scheme (pre-2010); Research Support Scheme (2010-12); Research Fellowship Scheme (since 2012)), and 3 members of the UOA have successfully applied for funding: Mark Hopkins (Sports Physiologist) was a Research Fellow from January – June 2013, and Nicola Eccles (Physical Activity & Health specialist) and John Perry (Sports Psychologist) are currently supported as Research Fellows during 2013-14 academic year. The Research Fellowship allowed Mark Hopkins to have time to write up his PhD, present at two conferences, and to further publish papers. Both Eccles and Perry aim to have submitted a number of papers for publication, to international standing, by the end of their research fellowships. The aim is for the work from both the current Research Fellowships to be of the standard to submit to the next REF and to start work around the future impact case studies for the department.

**ii. Research students**

Research degrees undertaken at Leeds Trinity University are currently awarded by the University of Leeds. Leeds Trinity's monitoring and support mechanisms therefore follow guidelines set out by the University of Leeds. The Research Committee at Leeds Trinity has overall responsibility for the internal quality for Research Degree Programmes and considers reports on enrolments and progression of postgraduate research students. An important initial stage of student progression is the 'transfer' process. Research candidatures which are intended to lead to a Doctoral award are subject to a process whereby the student is formally assessed and, if successful in the assessment, is 'transferred' to a specific degree category after an initial, provisional stage. The assessment at 'transfer' stage is intended to identify whether the individual student and the research project have the potential for research at Doctoral level and also whether completion of a thesis within the standard period of study for the programme concerned is a reasonable expectation. Students are required to submit reports, which should include a planned schedule of work and a synopsis of work already carried out or a sample chapter, within 10 months of commencement for full-time study (22 months for part-time students).

The monitoring of research students is undertaken through the supervisors. Supervisors are required to provide regular written reports on the student's progress which are presented to the Research Committee. Leeds Trinity's reporting processes require reports on admission, transfer and examination, in addition to interim 6 monthly reports. The committee considers the reports and where there are matters of concern arising, recommends the appropriate action to the Postgraduate Research Tutor and supervisors.

All students enrolled on a Research Degree Programme at Leeds Trinity have access to the training courses provided by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit (SDDU) at the University of Leeds. A wide range of training is available through the SDDU including personal skills development (such as project management) and research specific skills (such as ethical issues in research, methodology, and writing and publishing).

The Unit is aiming to increase the number of research students significantly in accordance with the University's 2013-16 Research Strategy which includes the objective to 'Increase the recruitment, progression and completion of postgraduate research students from the UK and overseas'. This is part of a longer-term aim to pursue Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) after 2016. Leeds Trinity plan to fund 10 PhD studentships (at the same level as Research Council funding) across the institution to be advertised in January 2014. The department of SHN plan to apply for 2 PhD studentships as one method to develop their research and PhD supervision experience. A route for increasing the number of research students is also planned through an expansion of taught postgraduate provision within the department. Students that are particularly successful at this level will be encouraged to apply for a PhD.

One SHN staff member who is to embark on her PhD in Nutrition (in 2014) will undertake this within the institution, supervised by Dr Lourdes Santos-Merx and by Professor Judy Donnelly, Director of Quality Enhancement (Learning & Teaching), a past SHN staff member. It is hoped that with this and the possible PhD Studentships, a small post graduate research group will be formed within the department.

**d. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

During the REF assessment period, oversight of research has been vested in the Research Committee, who were responsible for the development and enhancement of activities relating to research and scholarship. It ensured that there was a supportive and proactive environment for these activities. The Research Committee was one of the primary standing committees of the Academic Board, the main University forum for establishing policy on academic matters, as such it advised the Academic Board on matters of policy relating to research. Among its membership there was a research student nominated by the research student community. The Research Committee was chaired by the Director for Academic Enhancement (Research) who was responsible for the development, coordination and implementation of institutional strategies for research. Since the appointment of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) a new deliberative structure has been implemented (October 2013). The purpose of the Research Committee has been revised and now operates under the title of Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). The Committee retains its status of reporting to the Academic Board on research activity. The activities of the RKEC will be supported at the operational level by the recently appointed Research Officer (October 2013) who will support the implementation and promotion of Leeds Trinity's research strategy. In addition a sub-committee of RKEC, the Research Degrees Committee, will be established to monitor the recruitment and progress of Post Graduate Research Students and develop relevant policies and procedures.

A recently formed Professoriate, comprising of Professors and Readers within the institution, also contributes to the organisational structure supporting research. Having regular meetings since June 2013, the Professoriate aim to contribute to informing future policy and strategy for research, and to generate research ideas and initiatives to enhance the relationships, reputation and impact of the University. The Professoriate meets at least once per semester and report their activities to the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor.

The Head of SHN has overall lead of the department's research activities, supported by the department Research Lead. The Head of SHN has been a member of the University Research Committee (A/Y 11/12 to date) and as such has kept up to date with all research activities, policies and opportunities within the institution. Under the revised structure, both the Head and Research Lead will sit on Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. The department will seek to apply for funding to help support research and thus increase research income. Specific planned proposals include a bid by Professor Judy Donnelly to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on supermarket nutrition information with a leading retailer, to support the PhD student in Nutrition within the department.

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

Research within SHN since 2008 has been focused on two main areas: 1) Nutrition and Public Health; 2) Exercise Physiology, specifically focusing on appetite and exercise using physiological underpinnings. Research in addition to this, has been linked to staff PhD areas of which are on-going: Sports Development and Policy; Sports Psychology; Biomechanics; Organisational Health; Employability. The two main research areas have been the basis for both the department's impact case studies for the Unit's REF 2014 submission.

Nutrition and public health research has helped contribute to educate school children, parents and their grandparents through an inter-generational cooking community's project run by the Department of SHN, Leeds Trinity University. This project was part of the 'Cooking Communities Project', a research initiative that received a £125,000 award in 2007 from The All Saints Educational Trust who support work in nutrition education through its All Saints Saxton Fellowship.

Dr Lisa Gatenby was the Department's Research Fellow through to 2010 who has subsequently become a full time lecturer within the department. The Research Fellow supported the Department's research team within this area. This research provide nutrition resources to schools in the Yorkshire and Humber area with recipes and training materials to support Cooking Community Champions who could pass on their skills to school children. This was an example of how the department provided research to the academic community in selected journal articles, whilst also contributing to nutrition practice through publications in practitioner-based journals as illustrated in the Nutrition impact case study for this Unit.

The Exercise Physiology research, carried out primarily by Mark Hopkins focused on appetite and exercise in relation to obesity control and management. Hopkins (employed at Leeds Trinity until September 2013) has published extensively from his research in significant journals including *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, *Sports Medicine*, and *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Existing research within the department involves a number of collaborative partnerships, with the breadth of areas illustrated below.

John Perry works collaboratively, taking a leading role in the International Centre for Mental Toughness Development (ICMTD) and works with AQR Ltd, alongside Dr Adam Nicholls at University of Hull. Perry is Co-Chair of the British Association of Sport & Exercise Sciences (BASES), Sport Psychology Interest Group (SPIG), contributes towards the British Psychological Society publications, and is on the editorial board for the *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*.

Dr Lisa Gatenby is an assessor for the Association for Nutrition (AfN) and is currently involved in a large scale Nutrition project 'Born in Bradford', a multi-organisation collaborative project. Gatenby regularly delivers to school teachers to disseminate her research in healthy schools/healthy nutrition, with plans for National resources to be developed.

Graham Turner is working with a team at Leeds Metropolitan evaluating the Bupa 'Start to Move' project over the next three years in primary schools and HEIs. Turner is a Coach Assessor for the UK Strength & Conditioning Association (UKSCA) and Editorial Panel Member for their journal *Professional Strength and Conditioning* (a peer reviewed professional industry journal). Turner is also currently collaborating with the Lead Strength & Conditioning Coach for England Squash at the English institute of Sport.

Dr Nicola Eccles is working on a collaborative research project with staff at Liverpool John Moores University in the area of health behaviour on a family weight management programme.

Beyond 2014, SHN will see extensive developments in the Department's research profile before 2020 with 6 PhDs intended to be completed as a minimum. This will bring a wealth of research to contribute to disciplines within Sports Development and Policy; Sports Psychology; Biomechanics; Organisational Health; and Employability. It is expected, with new staff starting in 2014 within Physiology and Biomechanics, that both areas will contribute further to these developments. In addition, the on-going aim to support Research Fellows and PhD studentships will further add to the Department's research base and contributions to a number of disciplines as detailed.