

Research Strategy 2030
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At Bath Spa University, we aim to be a vibrant and well-connected centre for new ideas, with no internal boundaries and an international profile for creativity, culture and enterprise in research. Our research leadership community will do this by embedding the University's values of Respect, Inclusivity, Collaboration and Sustainability into all of our work, and by actively engaging with stakeholders from across the local, regional and global community.

Strategic research aims for 2030

- Continue to support internationally significant and world-leading research at Bath Spa University
- Deepen international research links and externally-funded international projects
- Continue to grow and develop strategic funding in research enterprise and knowledge exchange
- Remain a university of choice for early stage researchers
- Conduct research in an ethical manner paying attention to environmental issues and issues of diversity
- Increase QR funding in the Research Excellence Framework post-2021.

1. Context

1.1 Research at Bath Spa is focussed around our core areas of research excellence that are linked to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and these are embedded within our 8 academic schools. There is emerging research across the disciplines that we offer at the University, which will be developed and supported as part of our research environment and culture. For REF 2021, these are currently:

- Art
- Design
- Business and Management
- Communication, Cultural, Media and Film Studies
- Education
- English Language and Literature, (includes Creative Writing)
- Geography and Environmental Studies
- History
- Music, Drama, Dance and the Performing Arts
- Psychology

1.2 Our research income has grown by over 500% since 2013/14 to £1.975M in 2019/20, of which £1.5M relates to international activities across this period. We achieved a small amount (£131K) of quality related research income (HEQR) as a result of moderate success in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise 2001 (RAE 2001) which has grown to over £1M due to success in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). We entered 50 FTE staff in RAE 2001 and have grown this

to 170 staff identified as actively engaged in research for the Research Excellence Framework in 2021 (REF 2021).

- 1.3 In REF 2014, 50% of our work was recognised as internationally excellent, including 15% which was world leading, and our aim for REF 2021 is to improve 3+4* to over 75% - showcasing how our global research excellence underpins our wide range of work, and our expertise in creative and professional practice research.

2. **Research Strategy**

2.1 Our research strategy centres around the distinctiveness of BSU research. We have developed a culture that nurtures excellence, and our Research Centres and Groups reflect our strengths and push disciplinary boundaries. Students are actively encouraged to engage with research and to contribute to the research environment in which they are taught, and we recognise the role of research in supporting innovative enterprise activity and engaging with business partners for effective knowledge exchange with staff and students.

2.2 Our three Strategic Research Centres will lead and support interdisciplinary research across the following areas:

- Cultural and Creative Industries
- Environmental Humanities
- Transcultural Creativity and Education

2.3 Our strategic objectives for 2030 are focussed around the following four thematic areas:

- Strengthening our research environment and culture
- Building our research enterprise and knowledge exchange profile and activities
- Creating a distinctive international research profile, linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Ensuring that our research underpins everything that we do

3. **Research Themes**

We will achieve our research objectives through the approaches set out in the themes below.

3.1 **Theme 1: Strengthening our research environment and culture**

3.1.1 We will create research that is impactful through the following ways:

- Research and scholarship that underpins all of our teaching

- Interdisciplinary Research Centres which address the challenges of our time with Research Centres and Groups focussed on our areas of research excellence
- Using our expertise across the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences to build interdisciplinary responses to research questions
- Recognising the mutual dependence of new technologies and culture and embedding technological innovation within our research practice
- Making a distinctive contribution to the creative and cultural economy
- Extending our expertise in engaged research practices through creative strategies and co-production of research with participants
- Building on our Research Matters initiative to celebrate and showcase our research, both internal and externally

3.1.2 We are committed to developing researchers of all career stages, and supporting those who wish to be research active. We will do this by:

- Recognising the value of professional and creative practice as research alongside more traditional forms research and scholarship
- Embedding an understanding of the importance of impact and public engagement in research practice
- Supporting our staff and Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) through our Researcher Development Programme to develop the diverse skills needed to pursue their research, collaborate locally, nationally and internationally, and engage with a wide range of stakeholders
- Maintaining our commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and our retention of the University's HR Excellence in Research Award.

3.2 **Theme 2: Building our research enterprise and knowledge exchange profile and activities**

3.2.1 The University's approach to research enterprise is shaped by our four principles of knowledge exchange:

- (i) A commitment to leveraging our creative expertise
- (ii) A commitment to inclusive growth and social enterprise
- (iii) An ally to business with focussed support for the SME and micro communities
- (iv) A deep network of governance and cultural organisations in which Bath Spa is an agile and collaborative partner

3.2.2 As set out in our Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) submission, and in our response to the KE Concordat, we will meet these principles by:

- Building on our existing business and industry partnerships
- Acting as a committed collaborative partner of both business, community and Universities and of our local and regional community
- Encouraging the co-production of research to enhance the quality and relevance of its impact, and ensuring that we build cultural diversity and cultural engagement into our activities
- Continuing to build strong partnerships to maximise the societal and economic benefits of our research.

3.3 ***Theme 3: Creating a distinctive international research profile, linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals***

3.3.1 To enable us to build a distinctive and globally excellent research profile, we will:

- Widen our international research links and externally-funded international projects, and in particular to develop our existing connections with countries/regions that might be underrepresented in the broader international research landscape
- Ensure that an awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is embedded in our bid development process and research impact strategies, and in our reporting processes
- Develop and deepen our engagement with the Global Challenges Research Fund
- Continue our targeted bid response based on existing areas of research excellence and building on and developing strong international partnerships
- Develop sustainable knowledge ecosystems that are challenge-driven, developmental, transdisciplinary and politically aware
- Promote equity in our choice of partners and our capacity building developments
- Embed our global research into our teaching and learning activities and curriculum

3.3.2 To help us to achieve our distinctive profile, we plan to develop the GALA network into a self-sustaining network with successful international relationships throughout the world through the following actions:

- Secure substantive research income for projects that involve Bath Spa collaborations with and/or via GALA partners
- Facilitate at least one SDG-focused teaching/student collaboration per year with a GALA partner
- Continue Bath Spa's GALA Outreach fund and make at least 100 awards, with 50% going to students and 25% to early career researchers
- Seek out research mentors from GALA partners to support Bath Spa's Research Leadership programme

3.4 ***Theme 4: Ensuring that our research underpins everything that we do***

3.4.1 In line with our Commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, our code of good practice for research includes a commitment to inclusion, accessibility, diversity amongst our researchers and the research that we conduct, and requires staff to demonstrate research integrity and the ethical robustness of their research processes and impact. We will develop this through:

- Investing in and supporting our Ethical Peer Review College members within all of our academic schools
- Delivering a robust training programme to support staff and PGRs
- A regular evaluation and review of our ethical processes and procedures

3.4.2 The University has a commitment to reducing the environmental footprint of our research in line with the University's Sustainability strategy. We will do this by:

- Applying learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic about how best to utilise online collaboration platforms
- Supporting carbon offsetting in line with funder requirements and University priorities
- Reviewing the carbon footprint of our data and ensuring that there is an appropriate data curation strategy

3.4.3 We are committed to ensuring that research underpins everything that we do, and that our curriculum is informed by and underpinned by the research of our staff. In line with the University 2030 strategy we will do this by:

- Ensuring that our content is research and practice led and agile in delivery, and assessed in a flexible and appropriate manner to ensure that deep and original learning is recognised, and helps students to build the skills that are needed beyond university and to develop the attitudes that will help them thrive after graduation.
- Ensuring that there is an international perspective to all of our learning, so that our students are global in their outlook, open to the possibilities of cultural diversity and at ease anywhere
- Supporting the talent of our staff and students, and providing opportunities to explore the issues of: inclusivity and decolonisation; international/global perspectives; and civic/social responsibilities that are both regionally anchored and relevant and address global challenges.
- Offering teaching and learning that is blended, interdisciplinary and offers students the chance to explore and experience research and co-creation, working in partnership with our staff and external partners.

3.4.4 The University aims to provide a high-quality student experience from recruitment to successful completion. We recognise the importance of the research culture and environment in supporting research activity and aim to integrate research students into research communities. Postgraduate Research (PGR) students contribute to the creation of a research culture and development of the intellectual environment.

We will attract the most able students by communicating our research strengths, investing in staff as supervisors, providing support and opportunities for training and skills development.

We will achieve this by:

- Attracting high calibre PGR students by promoting our research strengths and the interdisciplinarity of our research environment
- Increasing the number of PGR students, both nationally and internationally
- Retaining our best students from Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes by offering early advice about research opportunities and recognising their loyalty with fee waivers
- Integrating our research students fully into the research communities linked to our research priorities

- Supporting the professional development of our supervisory community as a priority and recognising the level of input required by giving PGR supervision an appropriately high weighting in workload models
- Promoting Professional Doctorate programmes and considering how a Professional Doctorate can contribute to the research environment and research activities
- Strengthening strategic relationships with employers and funding bodies, ensuring that recruitment and skills training strategies meet their expectations
- Providing advice and support about different career options for PGR graduates, recognising the reality that less than 50% of graduates progress to careers in Higher Education.
- Providing support for our PGR alumni community by encouraging them to continue to engage with our research centres and groups, and where appropriate, in seeking funding and offering opportunities to help them to develop their research careers.

3.4.5 The University's Open Research strategy encourages staff to make their research freely available in order to benefit the wider public. We will continue to support this through an ongoing commitment to the following initiatives:

- The University repository – ResearchSPAcE – which holds details of the research outputs of all staff and allows the University to showcase its excellent research.
- The University research data repository – BathSPAdata – which enables staff to upload their research data into a secure space, and to share this data publicly where appropriate, or where funders or publishers require this as part of their conditions
- Wherever possible, make more of the University's research outputs openly accessible, including full text journal articles, books, and the representation of creative practice research outputs through video, sound, or images
- Fostering a culture of open research by supporting and raising awareness amongst researchers, including in the development of open access policies for University publications and edited journal titles
- Maintaining our commitment to the San Francisco Declaration on Open Research Assessment (DORA) and the Concordat on Open Research Data.
- Using the Research Matters initiative to showcase our research to staff and students, and externally to the wider community.