

**Institution: Bath Spa University**

**1. Context and mission**

1.1 Institutional Context

1.1.1 Bath Spa University (BSU) has a vibrant, disciplinary and interdisciplinary research culture devoted to developing and sustaining research excellence, and is an innovative and resourceful University with roots in the synergies between employers, knowledge and creativity that are the drivers of sustainable economic development. We pride ourselves on our sense of community and our nurturing ethos; our purpose is to challenge our students to realise their talent and our staff to attain their research potential, both for their own benefit and for the wider good.

1.1.2 The University has nine areas of research excellence spread across its eight academic schools, as well as a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research centres and groups.

1.1.3 Our academic community on 31 July 2020 consisted of:

<b>Staff/Student Group</b>	<b>Number</b>
Undergraduate	5222
Postgraduate Taught	1149
Postgraduate Research	131
Academic staff	416

1.1.4 Since REF2014, the University has consolidated its position as an increasingly influential research institution in its peer group, and the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) (PVCRE) is currently the Chair of [GuildHE Research](#) - the research consortium for smaller and specialist higher education institutions. It provides researchers of all stages with opportunities to network and collaborate with peers across the UK and from a broad range of disciplines, facilitating activities face-to-face and virtually, including an annual doctoral summer school, training events, and opportunities to forge new projects and communicate research.

1.1.5 Our Knowledge Exchange strategy has been developed in response to the needs of our local and regional local partners and focuses on:

- A commitment to leveraging creative expertise
- A commitment to inclusive growth and social enterprise
- Allying to business with focussed support for the SME and micro communities
- a deep network of governance and cultural organisations in which Bath Spa is an agile, collaborative partner

1.2 Research at Bath Spa:

- Has a strong social engagement element, including research on social justice topics and with societal and environmentally-engaged research and arts practices.
- Happens through, on, and with practice; including critical practice, creative practice, and professional practice (such as working with teachers, health practitioners and social workers, NGOs and governmental agencies)
- Takes a collaborative, participatory and interdisciplinary approach that enables issues to be examined from a variety of perspectives to provide more nuanced and multi-perspectival outcomes

- Embeds impact in our research strategy and throughout the research cycle.

## 2. Strategy

2.1 **Our 2030 strategic research objectives** are focussed around four key areas:

- Strengthening our research environment and culture
- Building our research enterprise and knowledge exchange profile and activities
- Creating a distinctive international research profile
- Ensuring that our research underpins everything that we do

2.2 **Progress since REF2014:**

- Institution-wide enhancement of research environment and culture, and the number of staff and UoAs submitted to REF
- Significant growth in research and enterprise income (see section 4)
- HEQR investment in the development of a Research Support Office and the establishment of three interdisciplinary research centres in Environmental Humanities (CEH), Transcultural Creativity and Education (TRACE), and the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCCI), alongside investment in school level centres and groups
- Establishment as a major collaborative partner in the creative industries and cultural economy of the region, with three major awards linked to this (see section 4.1.4)
- Substantial growth in international connections and collaborations, and establishment of the Global Academy of Liberal Arts (GALA)
- Significant steps forward in developing our ECR and PGR communities (see section 3)
- A commitment to working through and on societal and environmental engagement, and on policy development

2.3 **Interdisciplinary Research**

The nature of our research mixes critical and creative research approaches and methodologies. These are enabled by interdisciplinarity and by combining creative, innovative and traditional research approaches and engagement strategies. Alongside our excellence in more traditional forms of scholarship, one of our key strengths is practice-based research, where we put conceptual, practical and pedagogical forms of knowledge into conversation with each other and work on, through or with, practice.

In 2016/17, the University invested in the appointment of three research professors to lead our Strategic Research Centres and to act as research mentors to academic staff and research leaders in schools. All school-level research centres and groups are aligned to one or more of the three strategic centres. These sponsor interdisciplinary events across the academic year, acting as forums to foster inter and multidisciplinary research collaborations. An annual research festival was established in 2018, and offers an opportunity for research students and staff to showcase their research and engage in interdisciplinary debate and discussion about their work.

2.4 **Research Impact**

Consideration of impact is embedded in the research strategy and supported throughout the research cycle, and involves training for PGR and staff including collaborative events with local and regional universities.

An Impact Research Fellow (IRF) was appointed in 2017/18 to deepen impact culture across the University, and we have invested in Impact Tracker software to help record and evaluate our impact activities. The IRF has developed a range of evaluation and engagement strategies and processes to support staff in their impact activities, particularly in creative and professional practice areas. In 2018/19 we appointed a cohort

of Impact Research Assistants from our PGR community to support the IRF and our academic staff in evidencing their research impact, and this has been foundational in developing an impact culture for newer researchers.

## 2.5 Public Engagement

The University is a long-term signatory (since 2013) to the [National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement \(NCCPE\) manifesto](#), and received AHRC support through the NCCPE to develop a strategy and operational plan. A PVC External was appointed in 2018, and works in collaboration with key cultural partners (festivals, theatres, social enterprises), city and region stakeholders (the city's MP, Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES), West of England Combined Authority (WECA)), and business organisations (Bath BID, Bath Business Initiative, Business West), enabling direct contribution to COVID-19 recovery plan agendas around place-making, job creation, health, well-being and sustainability. As a result of the collectively raised profile the University was granted accreditation as a social enterprise in July 2020, and is currently submitting for Gold Mark Accreditation. Alongside our own initiatives - the Forest of Imagination project in our School of Education and the ACE funded Paper Nations project (see 4.1.4) - we are working with the University of Bath (UoB) to submit a Joint Civic University Partnership agreement focusing on Arts, Creative Industries and Culture, using as our evidential base joint initiatives (the ISTART/Restart projects with UoB, BANES and the WECA and the Bath City of Imagination collaboration between the two universities).

## 2.6 International Research Strategy

Our International Research Strategy, led by the PVCRE as Chair of the University International Steering Group, is focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). We have strong research collaborations, networks, and partnerships, with international connections through our Global Academy of Liberal Arts (GALA) network (see section 4.2.4), and through Global Challenges Research Funding (GCRF) and by Erasmus+ staff mobilities and capacity building. The PVCRE is a member of the British Council HE Sector Group.

A recent analysis mapped our research across all 15 of the UN SDGs, with funded projects in ODA countries including Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, and South Africa.

## 2.7 Knowledge Exchange

The University has invested in a new creative enterprise hub in Bath city centre – The Studio at Palace Yard Mews – to build on our connections and collaborate with local business, organisations and charities. The ISTART and Restart initiatives in partnership with the University of Bath Innovation Centre (Set Squared) and Bath College, are establishing an interdisciplinary knowledge exchange platform, augmented by regional work with WECA and an expanding business portfolio beyond the University's well-established creative industries strengths. In both regional cultural strategy and recovery plans, the University has had a direct impact, and its strengths in creativity, culture, environment and socially-applied science are responding strategically to the opportunities emerging from COVID-19 economically, socially, culturally. The recent selection of BSU as a partner leading the National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange (NCACE) testifies to this direction of travel.

## 2.8 Research Governance

### 2.8.1 Open Research

- The University is strongly committed to the principles of open research, with a strategic vision that goes beyond the requirements of REF2021 and seeks to embed openness in

all stages of the research life cycle, at all stages of researchers' careers. This commitment has been backed up by significant investment in infrastructure, people, and training

- The University launched a repository for research outputs ([ResearchSPAce](#)) in 2012/13 and a research data repository in 2016/17 ([BathSPAdata](#)). The University's [Open Access Policy](#) goes further than the REF2021 equivalent, encouraging open access deposit - wherever possible - of monographs, book chapters, underlying data, and e-portfolios that disseminate our creative arts and practice-based research
- Strategy and policy in this area is steered by an Open Research Working Group, which proactively responds to sector-wide developments such as the San Francisco Declaration on Open Research Assessment (DORA) and the Concordat on Open Research Data. Operationally managed by a Library team, the University fosters 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. The PVCRE is a member of the UUK/Jisc OA Strategy Group

### 2.8.2 Research Integrity

The University has a [Code of Good Practice in Research](#), and complies with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity through:

- Mandatory ethics training for all academic staff (93% compliant in 2019/20)
- An Ethics Review College which provides mentoring to support academic staff engaged in these processes
- Subscription to the Data Curation Centre which enables Data Management Plans to be created through their system as part of the ethical approval process
- A robust risk assessment process for science-based subject areas

## 3. People

### 3.1 Staffing Strategy

3.1.1 As set out in our [2030 research strategy](#), we are committed to developing researchers at all career stages, and supporting those who wish to be research active by:

- Monitoring sector wide recommendations for best practice in research culture (e.g [The Wellcome Trust](#), [ARMA](#), [UKRI](#) and the Government's R&D Roadmap)
- 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 (RDP), the MA in Professional Practice in HE, and our Research and Enterprise Leadership programme
- Maintaining our commitment to the [Researcher Development Concordat](#)
- Recognising the value of professional and creative practice as research

3.1.2 An annual promotion round for Readers and Professors was put in place in the academic year 2013/14, supported by promotions workshops and comprehensive feedback for unsuccessful candidates provided by the PVCRE. There is an annual review of the promotions process, and a new route for Creative Enterprise and Innovation Readers and Professors was introduced in 2019/20. Since 2013/14, 38 Professors and 26 Readers have been appointed (see section 3.5 for more details).

### 3.2 Researcher Development Concordat

3.2.1 The University was one of the first 50 UK HEIs to achieve the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) in 2010, and has successfully retained this since.

3.2.2 Bath Spa is a signatory of the new UUK Concordat, and a new Research and Enterprise

Leadership programme was launched in 2020, alongside a range of additional initiatives in response to the new requirements for managers of researchers. We have committed to the requirement of an annual 10 days' professional development allocation for all staff on research-only contracts, and are working towards this for all academic staff.

- 3.2.3 The Head of the Research Support Office is an external reviewer for the HREiR Award and, along with the Research Development Manager (RDM), engages actively with Vitae, the representative sector body in this area.

### **3.3 Support for Early Career Researchers (ECRs)**

- 3.3.1 Early career researchers are allocated lighter teaching loads and teaching timetables and adjusted to take account of the needs of particular research projects or writing activities.
- 3.3.2 Our RDM engages regularly with research staff from our ECR, contract researcher and PhD communities, and has worked with them to develop bespoke researcher development programmes and events. For example:
- Seed funds established to build a supportive research environment to fund ECRs in developing their research careers, and to support PhD researchers and ECRs to develop training events for their peers as part of the 'Journeys in Research Series'
  - A bespoke programme of training events for our contract researchers – 'The Network' – enabling them to select the topics of their development and work regularly as a cohort with an external trainer
  - MA modules designed specifically to support and accredit professional development in key areas for researchers – 'Supervising Research' and 'Researcher Development'
- 3.3.3 All ECRs are given the opportunity to be allocated a mentor from across the research leadership community, attend bespoke induction and training inductions, and access a professional external coach to offer one-to-one coaching for the development of their careers, publications and profiles.
- 3.3.4 The Research Support Office (RSO) works actively with our Careers and Employability team to offer appropriate training to FTC Researchers and ECR staff as part of the RDP. Careers staff provide one-to-one consultations for PhD students, and offer surgeries at our research site in Corsham on a regular basis.
- 3.3.5 All new research staff are invited to a Research Induction event with the RSO and Library Services to ensure that they are aware of the support available to them, and the University policies and procedures pertaining to research.

### **3.4 Research Students**

- 3.4.1 The Graduate College provides administrative and financial support for students at all stages of their PhD, including the Postgraduate Research Support Scheme (PGRSS) to support the formation of postgraduate research communities through events, workshops and online resources, and the 'Journeys in Research' initiative. The University also engages with other universities in the SW to offer opportunities for students such as the SW Grad School Residential programme, and PhD conferences and workshops through GuildHE.
- 3.4.2 The RDP offers bespoke workshops for the PhD community to support the successful completion of their doctorates. This includes the annual 3-Minute Thesis competition, which is an opportunity for students to showcase their emerging research to the University community. They are also encouraged to present and attend Research Centre and Group seminars and workshops, present posters at the annual research festivals, and have the opportunity to disseminate their work through lectures at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. PhD students are also encouraged to audit the



MA Module in Researcher Development so as to formalise their training and development.

- 3.4.3 All research students have opportunities for relevant work experience through the Graduate Teaching Assistant Scheme (GTA) and the Graduate Research Assistant Scheme (GRA). These schemes allow students who have successfully completed their Progression Assessment to undertake teaching and to develop valuable research skills and experience alongside their studies.
- 3.4.4 The University is a member of the South, West & Wales AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership (SWW2), a multi-institution consortium led by the University of Bristol which provides flexible, student-centred training that nurtures disciplinary expertise in conjunction with interdisciplinary perspectives. BSU has registered 12 DTP students in total across the period 2014-2020.
- 3.4.5 We have 3 externally-funded PhD studentships supported by: the AHRC Creative Cultures project; the Primary Science Teaching Trust; and the Avon and Somerset Police.
- 3.4.6 An internal fee waiver scheme in place from 2015/16 which has funded 11 studentships across the REF2021 period.
- 3.4.7 The University has funded 46 staff to undertake PhDs since 2014.

### 3.5. Equality and Diversity

- 3.5.1 The University's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) has a strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for all staff and a fair and equal work environment for all. The University achieved Stonewall recognition in 2014, and a University Equalities Project Officer was appointed in 2017 with an active equality agenda which aims to develop and support our diverse staff and student communities which include a Women's Leadership Network, a LGBTQ+ Staff Network (SONDER), a Disabled Staff Network, and a Global Inclusivity Staff Network, all of which hold regular meetings and events.
- 3.5.2 We have worked hard to introduce measures that aim to reduce the gender pay gap at Bath Spa including diversity and unconscious bias training and our Developing Leaders Programme.
- 3.5.3 We revised the University's Equality Objectives in 2018 to bring to the forefront the recruitment, inclusion and retainment of women and BME staff and students. Initiatives include actively supporting our female staff in their professional development via in-house initiatives such as workshops on Imposter Syndrome and Leadership. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) campaign has highlighted the difficulties that black people routinely face, and in response to this the University has put in place a number of initiatives.
- 3.5.4 Female professors currently account for 47.62% of our professorial headcount, which benchmarks well above the sector (27% women in 2018/19). There is still a difference between the level of female representation among senior academic staff and the wider academic population, although this gap has narrowed significantly from 18.2% in 2013/14 to 43.1% of these roles, compared to 28.1% in 2018/19. This is above our comparator group (39.9%) South West Universities (33.2%) and all UK Universities (35.6%).
- 3.5.5 An analysis of promotion applications for the period 2013/14 - 2019/20 (see below) shows that there are a higher number of women applying for promotion than men, and that success rates are broadly comparable (51% for Readers and 46% for Professors overall). This is not the case however for BME staff, despite a higher number of

applications, and this is being addressed as part of a comprehensive review of our promotion process at the current time.

<b>Staff category</b>	<b>Readers</b>	<b>Professors</b>	<b>% Total Academic Staff</b>
% of female applicants (success rate %)	66% (51%)	43% (50%)	55%
% of male applicants (success rate %)	34% (52%)	57% (44%)	46%
% of BME applicants (success rate %)	14% (30%)	16% (44%)	9%

3.5.6 Equality and Diversity principles have been embedded in our preparations for REF2021 in line with our [Code of Practice](#). All staff engaged in the management of REF and in the identification of staff and outputs have attended REF specific Equality and Diversity training, and a REF Equality and Diversity Working Group monitors data and adherence to the CoP. The Working Group identified positive action that the UoA Advisory Groups could take in prioritising outputs from women and from younger staff, and this has been taken into consideration by these groups. All academic staff at the University were asked to indicate whether or not they felt that they met our published criteria for 'Significantly Responsible for Research' (SRR) and all of those who have been identified as SRR have been encouraged to apply for individual staff circumstances reductions in outputs where appropriate.

3.5.7 Academic staff breakdown for SRR staff submitted to REF 2021 is set out below:

<b>Staff Category</b>	<b>% of SRR Staff</b>
Readers in Research	13%
Research Professors	19%
Early Career Researchers	12%
Permanent Contracts	97%
Fixed-Term Contracts	3%
Academic (Teaching and Research) staff	97%
Research only staff	3%

3.5.8 The University undertakes an annual benchmarking exercise, comparing HESA Data with the University's staff HESA return for the same period. In particular, data analysis shows:

- The gender split for all academic staff for 2018/19 (51.9% female) is significantly higher than the averages for all universities (45.9% female). This has changed to 52.8% for 2019/20, with a higher percentage (53.2%) of female academic staff identified as SRR for REF
- In 2018/19, the percentage of staff declaring themselves disabled across academic staff was 7.0% compared with 5.4% for BSU comparators. This dropped to 5.9% in 2019/20, with a higher rate of 6.8% declaring disabilities amongst the SRR group
- The proportion of academic staff identifying as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) increased to 7.6% in 2019/20. This still leaves the University behind the sector (12.9%) and it is of note that our percentage of staff choosing not to disclose this information is significantly higher than our comparator groups. However, the proportion of SRR staff identifying as BME is higher at 9.5% than across our wider academic community

- The percentage of BSU staff aged 35 and under is generally lower than our sector benchmarks. This is particularly noticeable in the SRR population of the university, with 44.9% identified as 51 and over (compared to total academic staff percentage of 43.5%), despite positive action being identified as part of the 2018/19 review of SRR staff populations

#### 4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

##### 4.1 Income

4.1.1 Since RAE2001, we have diversified our income streams, improved our success rates and have grown funding at a remarkable rate, as set out in the table below:

Assessment period	RAE 2001	RAE 2008	REF 2014	REF 2021
GBP	932,000	667,000	1,478,000	9,560,000

This includes a growth on an annual basis across this REF period from GBP318,000 in 2013/14 to GBP2,058,000 in 2019/20.

4.1.2 Our investment in three Strategic Research Centres have led to a range of interdisciplinary bids, awards and research collaborations, over the REF2021 period:

- Centre for Creative and Cultural Industries (CCCI) - total: GBP1,794,771 including:
  - Partner in Research England funded South West Creative Technology Network project (SWCTN), a GBP6.5 million project to expand the use of creative technologies across the SW, including funded Fellowships for 7 of our academic staff across the themes of Immersion, Automation and Data
  - Partner in the AHRC funded Bristol+Bath Creative R+D – a GBP6.8 million collaboration that aims to raise the bar for the region’s creative industries
- Centre for Transcultural Creativity and Education (TRACE) – total: GBP1,009,957 including:
  - Paper Nations - a creative writing incubator funded through two major grants from Arts Council England. The project commissions writers throughout the SW of England to create new work, nurtures local communities of support for writers, and creates multi-channel partnerships to showcase new writing internationally
- Centre for Environmental Humanities (CEH) - total: GBP2,965,410 including:
  - International projects and collaborations, fellowships with the Rachel Carson Centre in Munich, and a partner in the Heritage Lottery Funded Bathscape project, led by Bath and North East Somerset Council

##### 4.2 Infrastructure

4.2.1 We have continued to invest our HEQR (GBP1.08 million) in developing our research environment in support of areas of world-leading research activities and impact. This includes:

- Further development of the Research Support office, adding expertise in bid development, research governance, impact and researcher development
- Internal Peer Review College
- Funding and Bid Development Workshops
- Comprehensive Researcher Development Programme
- School and university led seed funding to support research environment
- 11 PhD fee waivers and 5 full PhD studentships



The impact of this has been significant, and the University was used as a case study to demonstrate good practice in this area by The Wellcome Trust in their report [Empowering UK universities: how strategic institutional support helps research thrive](#).

4.2.2 The University has provided significant matched funding for projects as follows:

- GBP810,000 match funding over 5 years in support of strategic research centres
- GBP113,000 per year to support the running costs of our Enterprise centre – The Studio
- GBP45,000 per year matched funding in support of the SWW Doctoral Training Programme

4.2.3 Our annual Global Challenges Research Fund HEQR grant of GBP50,000 is used to match fund ODA focussed UKRI projects, and to support a seed fund for networking activities, research collaborations and pilot projects with partners from ODA countries.

4.2.4 The University invested in the Global Academy of Liberal Arts, founded in 2014 – an international community of diverse, innovative, and socially responsible universities and colleges, whose aims are to transform lives and to enhance global understanding through interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching and research. Its outreach fund makes up to 50 awards each year to staff and students, and research mentors from GALA partners support Bath Spa's Research Leadership programme.

### 4.3 Facilities

4.3.1 The Grade I-listed Corsham Court is home to the Graduate College and the RSO, and offers space for research staff and high quality conference facilities for research seminars, conferences and workshops, as well as dedicated studio space for music and textiles teaching and research.

4.3.2 The University has a purpose-built concert hall and theatre, and these facilities are used to support our creative practice-based research, and for public engagement and impact focused events.

4.3.3 Since 2014, The University has invested in:

- The flagship GBP40 million Commons building which features state-of-the-art conference rooms, television studios and digital media facilities
- A GBP32 million Locksbrook Campus developed specifically for Art and Design at the refurbished Herman Miller Factory, offering purpose-built, generous studio spaces, seminar, meeting and teaching rooms, high-end technical facilities, well-equipped workshops and a public facing gallery. These facilities have been designed to support our creative practice in collaboration with local and regional creative industry professionals
- The Studio - an Enterprise and Innovation hub in the centre of Bath, home of our SWCTN and Creative Clusters projects, designed to support students and academic staff in their engagement with business and industry. Our 19/20 GBP52,000 HEQR Strategic Priorities Funding grant was used to support the development of The Studio, and networking and collaborative events with local businesses

4.3.4 In 2020/21, the University is in receipt of its first World Class Laboratories HEQR grant of GBP153,000, which has been invested in the School of Sciences to support research facilities and equipment in those UoA areas.

### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Issues

4.4.1 Support and opportunities are available to all staff, not just those identified as SRR, and include: mentoring; the RDP and Seed Fund awards; leadership programmes and promotion opportunities. All of these initiatives have clear and transparent processes, with

comprehensive feedback available to foster an open and encouraging culture, with decisions made by a representative panel of senior research leaders.

4.4.2 The REF UoA Advisory Groups were set up to ensure that members were representative across our academic community, and all panel members were required to undertake REF specific Equality and Diversity training.

4.4.3 The Strategic Research Centres all have representative Advisory Groups/Steering Groups in place and we have also used SPF funding to work with an independent advisory to offer inclusivity workshops across our research staff community.