

Institution: Kingston University

1. Context and mission

Kingston University's mission is to foster knowledge and learning that benefits society. Our institutional approach aligns research, knowledge exchange, professional practice and teaching within a framework of impact, supporting staff and students to work collaboratively on key challenges in areas such as health, technology, creativity and culture, business and entrepreneurship. Research underpins the University's response to various national agendas, including education and skills, and economic and social recovery after COVID-19. Equality, diversity and inclusion underpin our approach to researcher career development and the promotion of an inclusive research culture, driving institutional strategies to support staff and students. We currently hold the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter Bronze awards and a number of diversity awards in recognition of work with staff and students. The University is a member of the University Alliance.

Since achieving university status in 1992 Kingston has continued to develop its research profile while maintaining its enduring commitment to professional, vocational and applied education and scholarship rooted both in its polytechnic history (1970) and its origins as Kingston Technical Institute (1899), subsequently incorporating Kingston School of Art and Gipsy Hill Teacher Training College. To enhance development in health and social care education and research, in 1995 Kingston began a mutually beneficial joint faculty arrangement with St George's, University of London. In agreement between both universities, research in UoA3 (Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy) is returned by Kingston. Cross-disciplinary research between the two institutions is strongly supported with co-location of staff on the St George's campus, joint collaborative grants such as NIHR CLAHRC/ARC, joint events, prizes and PhD student supervision.

Located in the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, south-west of London, Kingston's research and impact has benefitted from access to strategic central London networks and civic and distributed regional partners across the south east and south west. The University makes a substantial contribution to the local borough through income generation and employment. In 2014/5 the University generated £921M and supported 12,500 jobs across the UK (BiGGAR Economics Report, 2016). Our civic purpose is aligned to our geographical location and we maximise the benefits of our distributed campus and academic and cultural facilities for research, public and cultural benefit and civic engagement. In 2020 the University opened its publicly accessible Townhouse building, designed as a 'civic gateway' to enhance public and community access. The University has worked closely with the Royal Borough of Kingston and our Local Enterprise Partnership on post-Covid recovery, utilising our research and knowledge exchange to that end.

Since 2014 the University has undergone reorganisation, restructuring both its academic portfolio and its professional and support services between 2017-19. It now has four Faculties: Health, Social Care & Education (which includes the joint faculty in health and social care, with St. George's University, London); Business and Social Sciences; Science, Engineering and Computing; and Kingston School of Art. This consolidation aimed to stimulate interdisciplinarity, diversification and growth in emergent fields, extend research quality, and more closely align teaching and research. In particular, reorganisation has supported research integration and development in areas such as allied health, digital and cyber-security technologies, business and social science, and the creative and cultural industries. Support services for research, impact and business development were also re-aligned to underpin these developments.

External research income amounts to over £25M, with major new awards from EU Horizon 2020, National Institute for Health Research, Innovate UK, NordForsk and EPSRC. The University has attracted significant external research income from a variety of other sources including Health

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Education England, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), Wellcome Trust, Leverhulme Trust and AHRC, as well as achieving almost £2.5M of KTP value awarded (£1.87M income).

Kingston University has an academic staff of 937 (801FTE), similar to 2014. REF 2021 submission comprises 11 Units of Assessment (9 in 2014). 2021 Units of Assessment are: UoA3, 4, 11, 12, 17, 19, 23, 27, 30, 32, 33.

Staffing	REF 2014	REF 2021
Total staff FTE	804	801
Staff submitted (FTE) (SRR)	139	368.25
Staff submitted (%)	17%	44.2%

The University has a global population of 15,767 FTE students (HESA, 2019/20). Our PGR community is 391 FTE, which is 2.5% of our global student population, an increase from 260 FTE in 2008 (1.3%) and from 316 in 2013/4 (1.6%). In the current period, postgraduate research has benefited from over seventy studentships with a combined value of over £4M awarded through the University's membership of the TECHNE Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) and the London Doctoral Design Centre, both funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The University has further funded over one hundred full studentships across the 11 Units of Assessment (UoAs), with a combined value of almost £5M. In 2019 it introduced a BAME-specific studentship initiative with 4 fully-funded awards annually. There have been well over 500 PhD completions during the cycle.

2. Strategy

Since 2014 the University has sought to expand research, investing in the development of people and the support of high-quality research with demonstrable impact. Kingston's research infrastructure has evolved since RAE2008 when results and feedback identified the need to enhance and manage quality and performance. Our strategy for 2014 was selective, focussing specifically on quality research. Building from 2014, research, knowledge exchange and impact strategies have targeted building capacity and capability and developing the foundations of an integrated and sustainable research, knowledge exchange and impact culture in support of KEF and REF. We have sought to develop:

- effective research, knowledge exchange and impact leadership
- increased collaboration through externally funded opportunities
- the supporting governance, research integrity and reporting frameworks
- an integrated performance and career development framework for staff and doctoral training
- investment in our research student community and growth of the Graduate Research School (GRS)

Kingston's future plans are based on:

- extending capability and capacity in research and knowledge exchange with a heightened emphasis on research impact addressing civic, local, national and international needs
- strengthening the sustainability of our research environment through leadership development and research centre infrastructure, to stimulate existing and emerging areas of research aligned to national and global priorities
- supporting the academic community to continuously develop their research, impact and knowledge exchange through our inclusive academic performance and career development framework (see Section 3)
- developing an inclusive research culture, built on mechanisms such as our REF 2021 Code of Practice and the delivery of targets and outcomes deriving from our access and participation commitments, charter mark activity and PSED equality objectives

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Research is an equal priority across all Faculties, although the scale and maturity of research specialism differs according to particular fields and disciplines, for example in areas of practice-based and vocational research and in newly emerging interdisciplinary areas. Our **Research Centres**, broadly aligned to Units, provide leadership, foster collaboration and advance research by: supporting the range and quality of research outputs through peer review and strategic insight at disciplinary level; enhancing the delivery of impact through externally-facing activity and partnership; providing a scholarly community, mentorship, practical assistance for funding applications and the design of research activity for staff and PGRs; fostering productive interdisciplinary exchange. In 2018/9 we undertook an institutional review of research centres to ensure their alignment with strategic objectives; appropriate sector bench-marking, sustainability and succession planning; and strategies for growth, income-generation and investment post-REF 2021, leading to measures implemented in next cycle. Faculties also support the development of more informal **Research Groups**, often allied to Centres, used to advance emerging research agendas, connect research and teaching, and develop impact. Centres and Groups are described in detail in the Unit Environment statements.

Kingston University Centres of Research Excellence
Centre for Health and Social Care Research
Interdisciplinary Hub for the Study of Health and Age-related Conditions
Digital Information Research Centre
Centre for Engineering, Environment and Society Research
Small Business Research Centre
Centre for Research in Communities, Identities and Difference
Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy
Contemporary Art Research Centre
Modern Interiors Research Centre
Visual and Material Culture Research Centre

Interdisciplinarity characterises a considerable proportion of research growth since REF 2014, and is especially fostered through Kingston's practical and applied discipline base. This includes social challenges such as ageing, learning disabilities and end of life care; patient advocacy; inclusive and sustainable creative education; research aligned to current business need, manufacturing and product development (for example, in the development of new construction materials with industry or new computer technologies); research linked to new business start-ups; and research contributing to culture and creativity through, for example, curation and exhibitions.

Commitment to **public and community engagement** is an important catalyst for research and knowledge exchange. Alongside sustained partnership with the museum and gallery sector (such as the Institute of Contemporary Arts and Design Museum), we have long-standing programmes of cultural and community engagement through the University-owned Stanley Picker Gallery and Dorich House Museum. Town House is a 'civic' gateway for a wide variety of public interactions and supports research collaborations such as the University's Muybridge archive partnership with Kingston Museum. We lead the Public and Patient Involvement Theme for the NIHR South West London ARC.

Our commitment to **inclusive learning** informs research activity. We have a strong track record in inclusive and participatory research design leading to impact, for example through our research centre for applied health and social care; and foster a strong commitment to social justice and

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advocacy leading to numerous third sector partnerships. We have further invested in the policy-facing impact of our research to increase its reach and significance. This has been underlined through our Covid-19 response, which has strengthened collaboration with local and civic partners to ensure sustained research impact in aid of economic and social recovery.

In the current period, notably since 2018, we have centralised our processes for **research integrity**, and invested in **open research** through improved infrastructure and staff engagement. Open Access initiatives have included: dissemination of research through freely available podcasts and electronic publication of books, essays and lectures under Creative Commons licence; sharing open source code and data sets and developing open source 'wiki' projects; public access digitisation projects with external partners. Open Science practices are being incorporated into our Graduate Research School training; Kingston has two Open Science Ambassadors to the Centre for Open Science, and a University-wide Open Research Journal Club. The Kingston University Principles for the Use of Research Metrics is aligned with DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment). We encourage staff to disseminate their research in the widest variety of formats (including practice research) and publishing routes. Researchers are free to publish in journals of their choice.

3. People

Staffing Strategy

The achievements, development and recognition of staff are core to our vision and mission; our staffing strategy aims to develop an inclusive and diverse environment in which staff performance is well supported.

Academic progression and promotion: we have recently piloted a revised process for promotion to Associate Professor to ensure a rigorous evidence-based approach using our Academic Career Development Framework (**Domains**, described below) in Research, Learning & Teaching, Business Knowledge Transfer & International, and Leadership & Management. This is underpinned by our 2015-20 research strategy and the KU22 strategic plan which maintains commitments to strong research leadership, effective research support structures and effective mechanisms for PGR and ECR training.

Flexible working: we are further developing a flexible working policy in light of Covid-19, piloting new ways of agile working.

Study leave policy: our policies support managers in granting discretionary study leave for research and scholarship.

Support for staff with caring responsibilities: our policy allows for 5 days paid leave to care for dependents, with discretionary additional days agreed due to Covid-19 impacts. Standard policies exist for maternity, adoption and shared parental leave. Our maternity pay policy covers up to 20 weeks at full pay.

Staff recruitment policy: sets out expectations of managers at recruitment stage, including training in unconscious bias; provides clear policies support the induction and probation process. Since 2017, 211 academic and research staff have joined, with 98.5% passing their probationary period.

Staff wellbeing: a new staff health and wellbeing network has been established to promote health and wellbeing issues, using institution-wide expertise; a staff wellbeing hub of resources has also been developed. Employee Assistance Provider and Occupational Health offer 24-hour support and face-to-face counselling. Sickness absence levels are relatively low (5.0 days compared to 5.5 days all institutions, 2019/20 UCEA data).

Career Development

Kingston's **Domains** Framework provides the criteria and standards to support career development, increase performance and reward achievement. It recognises the diversity and interconnectivity of career activities and roles undertaken by academic staff. The framework comprises 5 'domains':

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1. Learning & Teaching
2. Research
3. Business & International Partnerships (Knowledge transfer)
4. Professional Practice, Impact and Public Engagement (Knowledge Exchange)
5. Leadership & Management

Each has clearly articulated standards, expectations and quality thresholds for every career stage. The framework is underpinned by a comprehensive programme of training and support (online and in person) and supports career personalisation by encouraging a 'mixed economy' of skills. It also assists workforce planning to allow agility and responsiveness to business needs.

The framework was deployed to identify 'significant responsibility for research' (SRR) as determined by Kingston's **REF 2021 Code of Practice**. Staff with evidence of a minimum 30% research domain are identified as having SRR. A research domain below this threshold is intended to support career development and may also recognise research as part of a larger programme of enterprise or leadership activity.

Research Leadership and Management

Research, Business and Innovation (RBI) services ensure effective governance, support and training for all aspects of research institution-wide. The core teams are: Research, including the Graduate Research School; Research Systems, Governance & Funding; Impact; Business Engagement; and Apprenticeships. Research leadership and management in academic units is provided by Faculty Associate Deans for Research, Business & Innovation, School Directors of Research and Directors of Postgraduate Research.

Support, Training and Development

In November 2020 we once again received the EU HR Excellence in Research Award following submission of our 4-year Review and Action Plan for implementing the Vitae **Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers**, subsequently becoming formal signatories to the Concordat. The Action Plan commits us to developing research training provision at all levels, including for example an open contract policy for researchers; and responds to feedback from the Career Researcher Online Survey and the Principal Investigator & Research Leaders Survey (both 2019), which highlighted the need for more robust appraisal procedures (contract researchers) and further training on grant finance management and project management (PIs). In 2019-20 a Research Leadership Academy known as RISE was piloted from Health, Social Care and Education, which will further inform future institution-wide leadership development. We jointly lead the South London NIHR ARC Capacity Development theme.

RBI central teams work in two distinct hubs to offer support: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; STEM & Healthcare. Key functions are: research development (including training and support for grant applications); business development & apprenticeships; research operations (including post-award support); impact (including impact training and planning, evidence, evaluation and reporting). There is a dedicated REF Manager and IP Manager. Library Learning Services (LLS) manage Open Access funding and the research repository, with oversight of related compliance and training.

Training is delivered through a structured programme aligned to the Domains framework, with additional investment in impact training and leadership development (2018) and Strategic Priorities funding utilised to enhance training in policy impact and engagement through specialist provider workshops (2019/20); and through biannual staff training weeks known as the Festival of Research. The 2020 Festival focussed specifically on the developmental needs of ECRs and PGR students, and BAME and gender issues in research careers. From 2019 we have held twice-termly School Directors of Research (SDR) Forums to exchange best practice in research development and management. Annual stakeholder workshops for PIs and consultancy/contract researchers respectively gather input to improve institutional support.

In 2020 we invested in a 3-year subscription to a suite of Epigeum online research training courses (Professional Skills for Research Leaders; Research Integrity; The Research Skills Toolkit), both in response to the challenges of delivering training during Covid-19 and to develop a long-term blended approach. Mandatory research ethics training is supported by Epigeum online programmes and annual workshops led by the UK Research Integrity Office. In 2018 we introduced an online platform (from infonetica) for the submission and review of research ethics proposals to ensure consistency of approach with effective University-level governance (KUREOS).

From 2018, our ECR training programme has delivered 60 training and briefing events to over 800 attendees. We have a competitive internal First Grant Scheme which provides seed funding and supports grant writing skills; between 2015-2020 31/80 applications were funded (Value £219k).

REF 2021 and its Code of Practice has also been used to build research community and strengthen peer review and mentoring. In 2019 a process for self-assessment of outputs was introduced and used as the basis for training staff in REF standards and protocols. The Research Leadership Academy (RISE) will further inform future institution-wide leadership development.

Graduate Research School

The **Graduate Research School** delivers PGR research training aligned with the VITAE Researcher Development Framework; the programme is responsive to feedback from the Postgraduates Researcher Experience Survey. It equips PGRs and ECRs with essential skills to develop as researchers and build research careers. A blended approach incorporates online training from the Epigeum suite of research training courses alongside in-person workshops. Unconscious bias training has been introduced for PGRs specifically. In 2019 we introduced a bespoke mentoring scheme for BAME postgraduate researchers. PGRs participate in developing the programme for the Festival of Research, ensuring that student-led events are foregrounded. Over the next 4 years we will focus on expanding PGR careers training. PGR supervisory training is mandatory for new supervisors; refresher training is mandatory every 5 years (minimum) for established supervisors, running on a triannual basis. Supervisor training now includes mental health awareness training in the context of PGR supervision; we run additional workshops annually for supervisors to exchange experiences specifically on navigating problems that can arise with the student-supervisor relationship. Faculties undergo formal periodic Internal Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Student Experience; they are required to deliver an action plan in response to the review findings.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University's approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) is fundamental to our research culture, supporting our mission to foster knowledge through positive engagement and partnership and informing the goal of societal impact of our research. Our sector-leading work includes the **Inclusive Curriculum Framework**, addressing the BAME degree awarding gap; and we have achieved Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan recognition at institutional level. Athena Swan Bronze awards are also held in Engineering, Life Sciences, Pharmacy and Chemistry, Computing and Mathematics; Health and Social Care and Social Sciences have made a Bronze application and await the outcome in Spring 2021; the Business School and School of Art are preparing Bronze applications for May 2021 submission. We have agreed ambitious access and participation targets with the OfS, and our Network of Equality Champions deliver projects to help shape an inclusive learning and research environment. EDI strategy is driven by our equality objectives and includes a coordinated series of actions to: enhance staff and student achievement and progression; ensure good governance and accountability; promote representation, engagement and inclusion; and deliver resources, training and development. Members of the Senior leadership team sponsor different strands of equalities work.

In 2020 new staff networks were created for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority staff and LGBTQ+ staff respectively. The University recently joined the Stonewall Diversity Champion network to access best practice resources to support staff. Our work on improving gender equality has helped us to reduce the median gender pay gap to 8.7% as at 31.3.20 which compares favourably to the HE sector pay gap of 15.5% in 2018/19. 11% (8 of 70) of substantive professors are BAME, compared to a benchmark of 10% in the Advance HE 2019 Statistical Report. 17% (28 of 165) of Associate Professors are BAME, compared to a benchmark of 10% for 'non professors' in the Advance HE 2019 Statistical Report. 23% of our academic staff are from Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority background.

As a precursor to our REF 2021 Code of Practice, a Code of Conduct was drawn up in 2018 to ensure fair and consistent practices in the use of Mock REF data. Thereafter, internal Unit-level selection panel members were required to undertake REF-specific training in unconscious bias (co-delivered with Advance HE). Selection of panel members was reviewed by REF Steering Group in respect of diversity and inclusivity.

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income and Investment

During the cycle, the University has realized a total of **£22,945,857** mainstream research income, an average of £3.28m per annum, showing a slight degree of improvement compared to the previous cycle which had an average of £2.72m per annum (£13,617,966). This was also supported by £2.52M academic, administration and central services research income, a category not returned in the prior cycle, of which 92% related to AHRC doctoral training block grants (LDOC/TECHNE). Despite this improvement, however, the growth in our research output and in SRR has not yet been matched by corresponding growth in mainstream funded research. Measures are therefore in place for the next cycle to increase the number of staff engaged in bidding, the degree of collaboration and the scale of bids, including:

- Formalising expectations about research bidding performance through our Domains Framework
- Developing research leadership, and increasing PI and Co-I capability, given the growth of staff numbers submitted to REF 2021
- Distributing QR more effectively to support and incentivise research performance of research centres and in areas of emerging research.

During the current REF cycle, the University has invested in research and impact development through a series of targeted initiatives:

- Research Transformation and Research Development Funds, established in 2015, to support new and developing research respectively. £1.M invested over a three-year period to support individual, collaborative and project-based research
- First Grants Scheme designed to build capacity in the generation of research income from an early career stage onward, £219K awarded in this cycle
- Impact Uplift Fund to strengthen and support the production of evidence for impact
- Vertigo Ventures Impact Tracker, providing training and support for staff in the gathering of impact evidence
- Strategic Priorities Funding used to extend policy impacts and deliver training to support policy engagement
- Santander Universities Funding targeted at international research visits to initiate or strengthen research collaborations

Over £340K from the Global Challenges Research Fund invested in developing projects and collaborations to support sustainable development, economies and societies, human rights and social justice, notably in South East Asia, in areas of health, computing, engineering, architecture, social sciences, business and the arts.

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Physical and Digital Infrastructure

Considerable investment into the campus (notably from 2018-21) includes teaching and learning spaces, libraries and archives, laboratories and technical facilities and public engagement space for exhibitions, performances and events. The Stanley Picker Gallery and Dorich House Museum are centrally funded with £315K p.a. (operations and staffing), supplemented by £80K p.a. Arts Council National Portfolio Funding and £40K p.a. from the Stanley Picker Trust to fund Fellowships.

Capital investment in the University's estate, facilities and digital infrastructure has benefited research over the period. £50M was invested in the flagship Town House, designed by RIBA 2020 Gold Medal winners Grafton Architects. The building houses the main library with high quality climate and humidity-controlled facilities for archives and special collections; and teaching, performance and social spaces. It is designed to be fully publicly accessible and to enhance our public and community engagement, providing a public platform for research-led events.

A further £33.4M has been invested in arts and humanities facilities at Knights Park Campus: the Mill Street building, designed by Stirling Prize-winning Haworth Tompkins (opened 2019) has new and enhanced workshops, post-production and animation suites, digital media labs and editing suites, a photography suite and specialist 3D workshops. Since 2014, £500,000 of new equipment has been added to the audio-visual loans store to facilitate free-of-charge borrowing of specialist equipment for arts practitioners and researchers. Prior to the refurbishment, a new hackerspace for creative coding and programming and a new Letterpress and Bookarts workshop were created in 2016 (£160K investment).

Building on improvements to STEM research facilities made in the previous REF cycle, laboratories and test facilities have benefited from upgrading and the addition of new specialist facilities. The University invested £0.52M in 2018/19 to replace the previous High Performance Computing facility, a further £50K in 2017/19 to build a 24 graphics processing unit farm along with the Centre for Augmented and Virtual Reality Environments (CAVE) (£53K; 2017). The Academic Centre for Cybersecurity Education and Culture, specialising in providing intelligence for live threats and strategies to combat cybercrime, received £900K of investment in 2018-21. New build allowed the development of dedicated laboratory space and extensive facilities (300 m²) for life sciences including cell culture, genome sequencing, proteomic and biochemistry (2013/14; ca £2M). A state-of-the-art drone testing facility was created at our Roehampton Vale campus in 2017 (£70K), and the test facilities are also being upgraded to support research in rocket propulsion. Total Investment of £141,500 in our Psychology laboratories in the period includes a new Behavioural Science lab (upgraded 2019) with eye-tracking and emotion analysis software, and the establishment of an electroencephalogram lab. During the first lockdown (March 2020) our Business School invested in access to an online Bloomberg Terminal.

Further investment is underway for the next cycle. An incubation facility is currently under construction at our Seething Wells campus. Opening in late 2022, this will provide flexible workspace to support both student working and research projects. An investment of £1.29M will improve labs and workspaces for the School of Computer Science and Maths, supporting research and PGR. The University is currently exploring options for consolidating all Engineering activity on one campus in a new facility. This will be the next major construction project for the University, at the forefront of which is a new approach to collaborative multi-disciplinary learning and research.

The University uses combined research capital and internal funds to support a combination of infrastructure projects benefiting research across the whole institution and local infrastructure supporting Units. An institutional example is investment in an online research ethics system (Kingston University Research Ethics Online System, KUREOS) allowing us to standardise and streamline governance, digitise storage and provide better support to ensuring quality of experience for participants; investment in EPIGEUM online training programmes for researchers; and research infrastructure to support research reproducibility and open research, for which we have also provided additional funding for gold open access routes. Improvements have been made

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to our Data and Research Repositories, for example by acquiring the REF 2021 Plug-In to improve the search and selection of research outputs for Units. We have further enhanced the Research Repository to incorporate portfolios of evidence in support of the Domains Framework. Local examples of other research capital investment include updating the Psychology Observation Laboratory, extending the GPU farm, storage facilities for a materials archive for research in design and sustainability, Electrocardiogram 'ambient condition' testing equipment and a new flow cytometer.