

Institution: Leeds Arts University**1. Context and mission**

We are an influential, world-facing, creatively driven specialist arts university where professional educators, practitioners and researchers collaborate to develop and enable excellence. We promote distinctive, critically informed and relevant practice in order to support the economic growth and cultural advancement of individuals and society.

The University has roots dating back to 1846 and the original Leeds School of Art. In 1842 the Leeds Mechanics Institute merged with the Literary Society, which led to the formation of The Leeds Government School of Design four years later.

We gained University title in 2017 becoming Leeds Arts University, the only specialist arts university in the North of England.

We undertook a significant building expansion project at our Blenheim Walk campus, completed in 2019, in order to widen our course offering and benefit our students. The new building includes a 230-seat performance auditorium, industry standard film and photography studios, enhanced fashion design studios, a new postgraduate study suite, a larger specialist arts research and reference library, and a public facing gallery.

During 2019/2020 the University had a total of 2570 students. The higher education student population totalled 2100. There were 470 learners enrolled at the University's FE campus.

The University's course portfolio is specialist and from September 2020 our offer includes:

Postgraduate courses (taught):

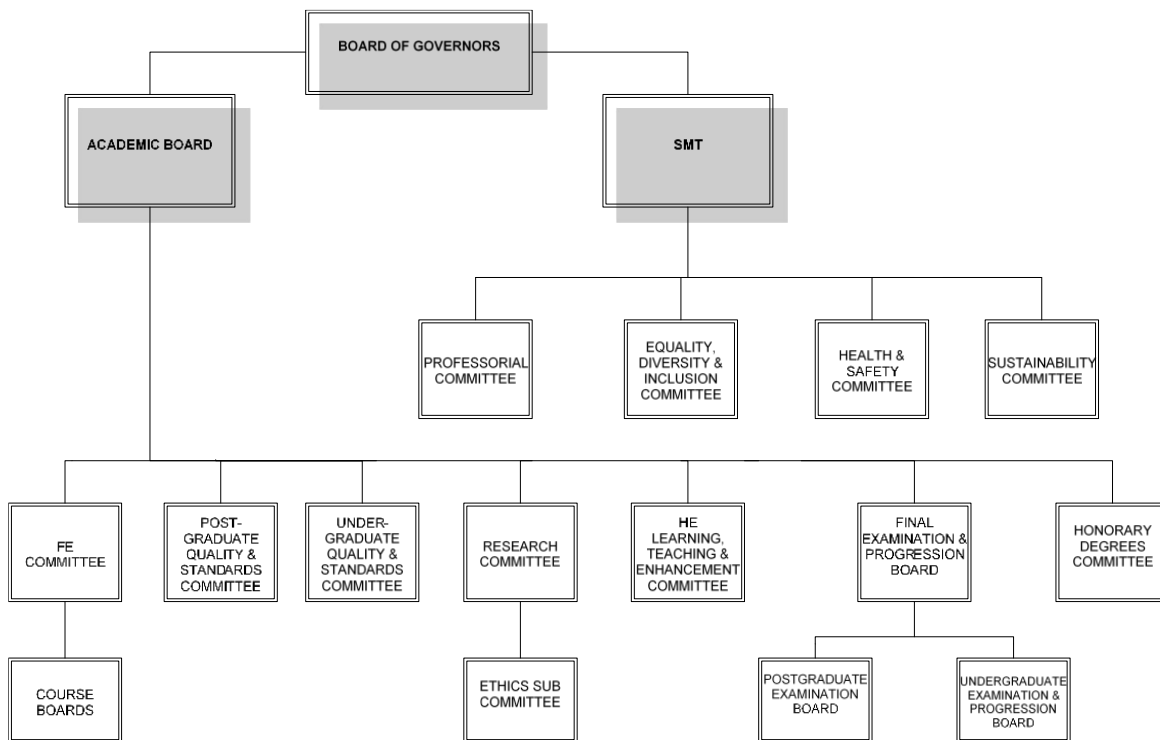
MA Animation
 MA Creative Practice
 MA Creature Design
 MA Curation Practices
 MA Digital Fashion
 MA Fine Art
 MA Graphic Design
 MA Graphic Novel
 MA Illustration
 MA Photography
 MA Worldbuilding

Undergraduate courses:

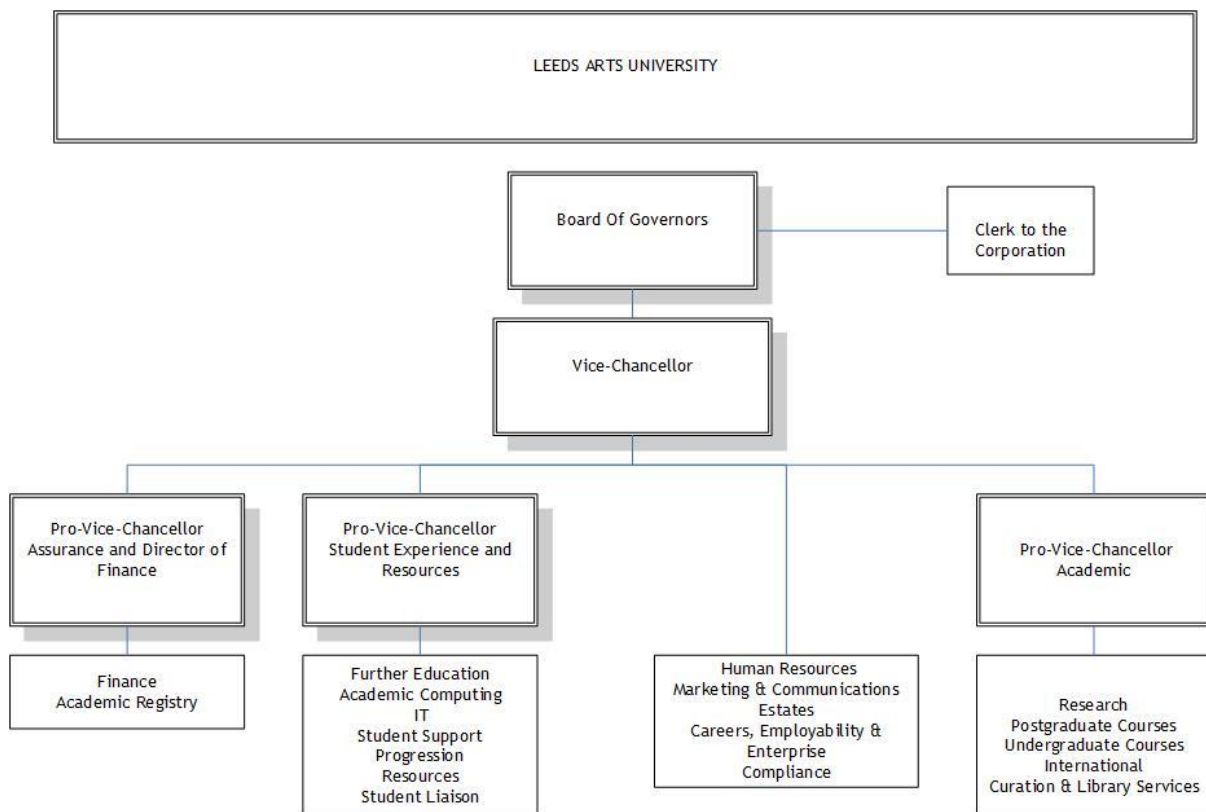
BA (Hons) Animation
 BA (Hons) Comic and Concept Art
 BA (Hons) Creative Advertising
 BA (Hons) Creative Writing
 BA (Hons) Fashion Branding with Communication
 BA (Hons) Fashion Design
 BA (Hons) Fashion Photography
 BA (Hons) Filmmaking
 BA (Hons) Fine Art
 BA (Hons) Graphic Design
 BA (Hons) Illustration
 BA (Hons) Photography
 BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance
 BA (Hons) Textile Design
 BA (Hons) Visual Communication

The University has ambition to gain Research Degree Awarding Powers and is formally engaged in a process with The Open University to become an Affiliated Research Centre which will allow us to offer Doctoral degrees.

Deliberative committee structure showing committees that report to Academic Board and Senior Management Team (SMT)



Management structure



The University has developed the research culture over the previous seven years, establishing a Research Committee in 2013 that reports to the Academic Board. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic routinely reports on research matters to the Senior Management Team and the Board

of Governors. The Head of Research produces an annual research report for consideration by the Research Committee. The Head of Research also chairs the Ethics Sub-Committee, which reports to the Research Committee.

On 31 July 2020, the FTE of Category A staff on teaching and research and research only contracts was 70.44. Currently research at the university falls into two Units of Assessment (UoA): 32, Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory and 33, Music, Film and Performance. All academic staff who work in higher education are on teaching and research contracts or research only contracts. Members of staff on research only contracts comprise the Head of Research, the University Curator, two Research Fellows, the Progression Manager and one Research Associate.

The University's mission is published in the Strategic Plan 2017-2023. It states '*We are an influential, world-facing, creatively driven specialist arts university where professional educators, practitioners and researchers collaborate to develop and enable excellence.*

We promote distinctive, critically informed and relevant practice in order to support the economic growth and cultural advancement of individuals and society.'

The Strategic Plan includes aims that refer particularly to research:

To continue to develop and progress relevant research practice which enhances teaching and learning, is globally significant and contributes positively to society.

- *To encourage and support collaborative approaches within our practices.*
- *Through investment, recruitment, support and development to increase our proportion of academic staff whose research is rated as 2* and above.*
- *To increase the number and range of collaborations with peer institutions in the UK and globally.*
- *To increase the number of staff qualified to doctorate and masters level who support undergraduate and postgraduate students and increase the number of postgraduate students, particularly through international partnerships.*
- *To advance our libraries, exhibitions and archives capability to support research.*

The University has been successful in meeting these aims through a Research Strategy 2013-2018 (amended and extended through to 2021 in 2019-2020). The approach taken by the University is to encourage independent research. The narrative about the University's progress in developing research is explained in detail as part of the Unit of Assessment level environment statements.

2. Strategy

Strategic and infrastructure planning for research began before 2013. At this point, all staff teaching in higher education were appointed on teaching and research or research only contracts and a dedicated research budget was established. The Research Strategy 2013-2018 (amended and extended through to 2021 in 2019-2020) was approved through the deliberative structure described in the previous section.

The main objectives were to:

1. Establish postgraduate programmes to enhance and progress practice-based research and scholarly activity in subject disciplines.
2. Develop research across the College [University] and encourage international links to enhance research outcomes.
3. Source research funding, as appropriate, from a wide range of sources.
4. Support our staff and help them to develop their research practice; encourage internal collaboration; and, through external networks and meetings, enhance subject-specialist knowledge (especially as it relates to teaching and learning).

In addition to the objectives described in the Research Strategy, a strategic Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for research of 20% of the REF 2021 submission being judged at being 2* had been agreed.

Impact

Impact arises from the researchers' interests, networks, publics and audiences. Researchers are supported through the research budget in building long-term relationships with the beneficiaries of the research.

Systematic support, training and mentoring are provided to those researchers whose work demonstrates impact outside academia. Activities that build impact are reported in the Research

Committee minutes and through the Vice-Chancellor's report to the Board of Governors in regular updates. Research staff who are contributing to impact case studies are responsible for identifying, documenting, measuring and providing evidence for the impact of their work. The impact case studies are made visible to the public and are celebrated through the [University's website](#).

Interdisciplinary research

Where interdisciplinary research is central to a researcher's practice it is facilitated through the research proposal process where individuals can request funds to support collaborative working with researchers from other institutions and disciplines.

Open research

The University is a member of Guild/HE Research and subscribes to its shared repository. The University is committed to making its research open and has employed a Research Co-ordinator to support this aim.

Research Integrity

The University's Ethics Policy sets out the guiding principles of ethical practice and also the expectations relating to research integrity. Research misconduct is described in the Ethics Policy and addressed through the University's disciplinary policy and procedure.

The Ethics Sub-Committee plays an important role in supporting research integrity; it reviews the Ethics Policy every three years and reviews staff research proposals on an annual basis. It is able to meet and respond to ethical issues as they arise.

The next five-year period

As this is the first research assessment exercise that the University has undertaken it is important that the strategy over the next five years is based upon a reflection on the success of University policies, processes and procedures during 2013-2020. The outcome of REF 2021 will also inform this reflection.

Developing strategy going forward

- Publish a review of performance in REF2021 by the end of 2022 that informs the next research strategy.
- Develop a new research strategy in light of experience gained from 2021 submission.

Developing support for researchers

- Through the process of continuous improvement, develop the research infrastructure to meet the particular needs of UoA 32 and UoA 33 researchers. It will provide support to newly established creative writing researchers from UoA 27 English Language and Literature.
- Continue to support and develop researchers through current research internal funding mechanisms.
- Support interdisciplinary research where it evolves from the researchers' own interests, relationships and networks.
- Utilise the University's research galleries and specialist collections to facilitate individuals' research.
- Use the HR Excellence in Research Action plan to drive improvement.

Create practice-based PhDs

- Achieve Affiliated Research Centre approval with a doctoral validating partner and begin supporting practice-based PhDs.
- Develop clear and transparent policies and procedures relating to ethical review, research integrity and academic misconduct.
- Develop approaches to support research students and ECRs.
- Establish the Research Team within a space that is utilised by researchers and research students.

Create successful distinctive research cultures at UoA level

- Support the growth of distinctive research cultures appropriate to the diverse arts subjects represented in the University.
- Ensure the diversity and inclusiveness of the research cultures that develop in the University.

Develop sustainable research

Institutional level environment template (REF5a)

- Research Team to work on research bids for external funding that are appropriate for a specialist arts University.
- Research Team to exploit their networks and expertise to promote knowledge exchange between the University and external partners in industry, the voluntary sector and local/national/ global communities.

Develop meaningful and wide-reaching impact

- Develop explicit support structures for identifying, developing, evaluating and measuring impact.
- Support researchers to deepen the relationships they have with their audiences, publics and communities.
- Identify new opportunities to promote impact where they arise from researchers' interests.
- Provide training and mentoring for those who can claim impact based on their research.
- Encourage collaboration internally and externally to promote impact.
- Encourage an integrated research and impact approach to build 'pathways to impact' where appropriate.

3. People

In 2013 the Director of Studies - Higher Education Enhancement and Research [now the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic with a responsibility for research] and a full-time Head of Research were appointed.

Since then the Research Team has been established by the employment of two Research Fellows and a part-time Research Associate. These research-only roles were created to invigorate the University's research culture and to provide support and mentoring for those on teaching and research contracts.

A University Curator was recruited in 2015 to manage the University's galleries. At this point Curation and Library activities became integrated with the University's research strategy. A peer review process was established for exhibitions overseen by an international peer review panel. The University exhibition spaces are a critical part of the research environment where staff, as well as high-profile international artists, can disseminate recognised creative practices. Developments in this area have led to increased public engagement.

A full-time permanent role of Research Coordinator was also created in 2018 to provide technical expertise in managing the University's repository.

The University has been recognised for its innovative approach in developing practice-based research infrastructure by winning a Times Higher Education Award (THE) in 2016 for *Outstanding Digital Innovation in Teaching or Research* for a collaborative research project with the University of Leeds. In the period 2017-2019 the University received 5 THE shortlisted nominations related to research infrastructure projects.

Teaching and research Category A staff are contracted to carry out 15 days research per academic year pro rata. The FTE for all Category A staff on the 31 July was 70.44. Over the previous seven years staff numbers have grown in areas of planned growth due to the development of undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Leeds Arts University is committed to supporting the development of all its staff including those involved in research. To demonstrate this commitment the University aligned its Human Resources policies and procedures with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The University has been awarded the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award in 2017 and 2019.

All Category A staff are entitled to inductions and appraisals regardless of size and length of contract. Development needs are identified and approved through the appraisal process. Staff are given appropriate training and development. For example, between 2014 and July 2020 the University has supported a total of 18 staff members to obtain their PhD qualification. Some of that support is currently ongoing.

The University is committed to equality and diversity in research careers. It has adopted an inclusive approach to the REF 2021 Code of Practice in spirit with the Stern Review 2016.

Through its policies and procedures all Category A staff are supported financially to undertake their research irrespective of length and size of employment contract. The Selection Process noted in the Code of Practice has been designed to encourage all Category A staff to submit at

least one output so that the breadth and diversity of research can be included in the REF2021 submission.

Research students

The University currently has no research students.

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The University's research is funded through its income. There have been occasions where individual researchers have been successful in being awarded funds from external bodies such as the Arts Council. There is currently not an expectation that researchers source or secure their own research funding.

Research is led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic who is chair of the Research Committee which reports to the Academic Board. The Board of Governors receives regular updates about the development of research and impact. The day-to-day management of Research is undertaken by the Head of Research who is also the chair of the Ethics Sub-Committee which reports to the Research Committee.

The facilities have been planned and developed in line with the University's mission and strategic plan mentioned above. In 2019 a £22m, state-of-the-art building expansion was completed in order to widen the range of courses offered and to benefit the students. The new building includes a 230-seat performance auditorium, large gallery, specialist industry standard music studios, industry standard film and photography studios, enhanced fashion design studios, a new postgraduate study suite and a larger specialist arts research and reference library. The library holds a comprehensive specialist artists' book collection spanning publications from the previous 90 years.

There is also a range of exhibition spaces around the University comprising The Blenheim Gallery, Vernon Street, The Boardroom, The Rotunda, Curator's Choice and Librarian's Choice. The University Curator manages these spaces. They provide opportunities for academic staff to disseminate their practice-based research. The exhibitions programme also brings other practice-based researchers into the University. The Exhibitions Advisory Board provides valuable peer-review feedback to those researchers submitting to the exhibitions' selection process. The University's galleries are open to the public providing opportunities for the underpinning research to benefit audiences outside academia.

The research and postgraduate teams are situated in the Blenheim Walk building. There are office spaces as well as large multi-purpose rooms with projection facilities that can be booked for research, impact and dissemination events. The Research Coordinator manages the Open Access provision for research outputs. They share an office with the exhibitions team and have a space in the University library. The research estate facilitates research and impact events relevant to the University's researchers.

The University is a member of GuildHE/Research, this is an important association as it provides research intelligence, information about the national research policy landscape and training opportunities. The University's repository is part of a shared resource facilitated by GuildHE/Research. A full-time permanent role of Research Coordinator was also created in 2018 to provide technical expertise in managing the University's repository. Following this, the University developed an infrastructure for a repository deposit process. This enabled Category A staff to have access to the University repository after October 2018.