

Institution: Liverpool Hope University

1. Context and mission

In 2019, Liverpool Hope University (henceforth 'Hope', or 'the University') marked the 175th anniversary since the first of its three founding colleges was established. The University pursues a path of excellence in research, scholarship and collegial life without reservation. Hope is Europe's only ecumenical university foundation, and, in keeping with its long-established mission as a socially-focused institution, remains committed to the public good and to the professions. The University's distinctive philosophy is to 'educate in the round' – mind, body, and spirit – in the quest for *Truth, Beauty and Goodness*.

From the outset of its achievement of University title (2005) and Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP; 2009), Hope made a strategic commitment to 'research-informed teaching'. All members of the Hope academic team are expected to be actively engaged in research and scholarship (R&S) and also (except in a few targeted vocational-training areas) to be in possession of a Doctoral level qualification. The University judiciously appoints scholars who can consistently enhance its academic profile and research culture. Hope fully concurs with the view that recruitment, development, and motivation of researchers are critical drivers of research excellence and has pursued consistently this path for the past twenty years.

Recent esteem indicators reflect the University's stated mission to be a research-informed university of distinction. Hope was rated the top university in Liverpool and top 3 in North-West England in the *Guardian* University league tables 2020. The 2016/17 Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey indicated that the University had one of the best graduate employment rates in the UK (placed 2nd in the UK and 1st in England), with 98.1% of Hope graduates in employment or postgraduate education six months after graduation. In January 2020, the University was named 'International University of the Year' by the respected *Academic Insights* magazine (<https://www.hope.ac.uk/news/allnews/liverpool-hope-named-international-university-of-the-year-.html>).

As a TEF Gold University, Hope's pursuit of an excellent research culture complements its well-established reputation for excellence in learning and teaching. Research is central to the Hope collegium and to curriculum design; it is a key part of the University's established track-record of 'knowledge-engagement'. Researchers engage with education organisations, businesses and industrial partners (both in the local community and internationally) in the University's programme-development processes, which draw on principles of co-design, co-create, and engage local community stakeholders.

The University comprises the following Schools: Education, Social Science, Business, Creative and Performing Arts, Humanities, Health Sciences, and Mathematics, Computer Science & Engineering. Two Departments (Psychology, and Geography and Environmental Science) will become Schools in due course. All Schools/Departments have a Research Committee which reports to the University's Central Research Committee (a sub-committee of the University's Senate).

The University has six vibrant inter/multidisciplinary Research Centres which reflect disciplinary spread and diversity:

- Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies [See UoA 4,19,20,23,31]
- Centre for Christian Education and Pastoral Theology [See UoA 31]
- Centre for Culture and Disability Studies (CCDS) [See UoA 23]
- Centre for Education and Policy Analysis (CEPA) [See UoA 23]
- Socio-Economic Research Centre (SEARCH) [See UoA 20, 23]
- Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity [See UoA 31].

These Centres reflect specific areas of strength and promote interdisciplinary activity across all Schools. Each Centre reports to the Central Research Committee on a quarterly basis and is reviewed annually to ensure that the University's investment remains appropriate. This matrix approach to research benefits the productivity of research-active academics at the University, especially through the pooling of resources for equipment, as well as through grant management support, generation of critical mass, enhancement of stature, and mentoring.

Hope had a successful REF2014, resulting in a quadrupling of research quality and hence QR Funding compared to the 2008 exercise – a success that has provided a platform for the University's strategy of increasing research activity across all Schools/Departments. To facilitate the growth in research activity, Hope after REF2014 sought to make a significant investment in the University's research environment.

To this end, the University, through its planned strategy, re-invested QR funding, and added to it significantly, entirely from its own resources, to increase research capacity, strengthen infrastructure and appoint researching scholars. The annual OR funding allocation was used to support research projects and activity across the University, and to pay for a number of Vice-Chancellor PhD Scholarships. To facilitate the focus on high-quality research activity, Hope has significantly invested £37.7 million in new buildings/refurbishments and £4.9 million in equipment, including £17.3 million in Science facilities (£1 million in equipment), and a major development at the Creative Campus amounting to £5.95 million plus £640k of equipment.

As a result of these investments in both infrastructure and human capital, Hope's capacity for research activity has increased. This increase has been measurable in terms of growth in the University's PGR numbers for this current exercise, and in Hope's ability to return research active staff for the first time under UoAs A6: Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Science; and D32: Art and Design. Hope is thus achieving its current strategic aims as well as laying a foundation for the University's future goals.

2. Strategy

Hope's research strategy is contained within its Research and Scholarship Development Plan, (R&SDP) originally written and approved by the Senate in 2006 and subsequently revised and updated for the Senate's approval in 2009. Following REF2014, a new 2014–2020 revision of the Plan (henceforth the R&SDP) was finalised via a process of open consultation at the University. This foundational document, which predates Lord Stern's review of REF, has guided the University during the current REF cycle. Its stated aims are to foster a culture of research active staff, increase PGR numbers, monitor the impact of research activities, and strengthen Knowledge Exchange (KE) activities. Management of the University's research strategy is the responsibility of the Central Research Committee, chaired by the PVC (Research), which reports directly to the Senate.

Hope is submitting 100% of 'Category A' eligible staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) in this REF. The 7.48% of Category A staff who have not met the SRR criteria are being actively supported to achieve SRR status as part of the University's development plans post-REF2021.

The R&SDP was independently audited (Baker Tilly 2014), with feedback stating: "Comparing the University's plan to 2020, we consider the plan to include more detail than other university research strategies that we have reviewed. We have seen other Research Strategies just containing strategic goals in ensuring research at the university increases. ***Where strategic goals are within Liverpool Hope's research plan, the plan is also a detailed policy document which outlines aspects of research at the University to encourage staff members to uphold a culture of research excellence.***"

Reflecting this detail, Hope has since 2014 endeavored to foster an inclusive, stimulating and sustainable research culture and environment, characterised by externality and internationalism, in which both research itself and research staff are nurtured, facilitated, and rewarded. Hope fully supports the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and uses the Vitae Research Development Framework (VRDF) to structure support for researchers at all career stages. Accordingly, the University has targeted support to Early Career staff to maintain

continuity in levels of achievement, while developing workshops for staff at a range of career stages.

Hope has also aimed to ensure that research activity correlates with the strategies of the Liverpool City Region's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). An example is the investment by the University on its Creative Campus to forge links with the LEP's Culture and Creative Strategy. Similarly, Hope has engaged with the LEP's Industrial Strategy by devoting part of the new Science Building to the City Region's Healthy Ageing Challenge. Hope has also targeted its HEIF funding to ensure that the Societal and Economic impact of research activity is aligned with the University's ethos. As noted, this has enabled the University to return activities in two additional UoA's for the first time.

Research Committees at School level are charged with formulating a Research Strategy document based on the operational plan within the R&SDP. This is updated regularly to reflect staff changes and new research specialisms arising with new appointments to the University. Schools' strategies are reviewed and approved by a Central Research Committee. Another review and update of the R&SDP will occur following the results and feedback from REF2021, ensuring that any revisions are reasonable and achievable. This review, as with all Hope's strategy planning, will be a consultative process with all stakeholders. Indeed, this process has already commenced during the formation of the University's code of practice for the REF2021 exercise.

Hope is committed to the Concordat on Research Integrity. The University is a subscriber to UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), and staff involved in research are expected to adhere to the principles drawn from its Code of Practice. These are outlined in the University's Research Integrity Statement of Principles embedded in the R&SDP. In addition, Hope's Research Ethics Policy explains the roles and responsibilities for staff in this area. Research integrity features within training sessions for academic staff and PGR students.

As an indication of the University's active involvement in KE and Impact development, Hope took part in the first iteration of the KEF (2019/20). Hope has adopted a clear strategy for KE and Impact, in order to build on its existing track record and continue to 'punch above its weight'.

KE has brought Hope into contact with a growing number of partner organisations. For example, two of the University's Research Centres, CEPA and SEARCH, have collaborated in the Educational Advantage Programme through the 'Hope Challenge'. The Hope Challenge focuses on areas of the North West which are poorer (where Pupil Premium is at least 25%). It supports the work of Local Authorities and HMIs by partnering with challenged schools that have been judged as 'requiring improvement' (including primary, secondary, and specialist schools) in order to find ways of enhancing the life chances of children.

Hope has endeavoured also to build Knowledge Exchange (KE) into the University's research strategies. KE has occurred across all Schools/Departments at Hope. The University has been successful in obtaining a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) within the Department of Psychology, enhancing Hope's CPD offering by working closely with business partners locally, nationally, and internationally.

Hope has created over 30 Vice-Chancellor Doctoral Scholarships during the current REF cycle. The University has targeted this initiative across disciplines where there is a need to strengthen research environment, and provide opportunities for research staff to become excellent supervisors for targeted doctoral research themes. The strategic intention behind this investment is to provide a platform for Hope academics to be able to collaborate with other universities in proposals for Doctoral Training Centres (DTC). In 2020, Hope was invited to be part of the University of Manchester's extension to their AHRC DTC. Hope has also actively sought funding from other funding bodies to support PhDs and PGT Studentships to ensure the sustainability of the University's improved PGR success rates.

To foster an open access environment at the University, Hope has invested in developing IOar (Institutional Open Access Research), an in-house platform designed for all staff to share research, data and encourage collaborations, support open research and open data initiatives. This repository is based on the 'GO FAIR' initiative that aims to implement the FAIR principles of making data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable.

3. People

Hope's Corporate Strategy commits the University to pursuing a path of academic excellence in which all Schools/Departments/UoAs produce research recognised internationally as excellent. The results of REF2014 confirmed Hope's trajectory in this respect. All staff, whether or not enterable in the REF, are expected to engage in appropriate levels of Research and Scholarship (R&S) to underpin their academic and professional responsibilities, and REF has been listed as a standing item on the University's annual staff induction programme. The University's preparations and stated goals for REF2021 clearly affirm this research-oriented direction of travel. This commitment has translated into practical areas such as the staff development programme, the performance review and wider performance-management arrangements, funding opportunities and the appointment of experienced high-level researchers to guide and assist less experienced colleagues in research development. R&S activity is accounted for in staffing allocation models, in annual performance review and forms part of Hope's wider performance-management framework.

The University has refrained from appointing 'research-only' staff (except where part of a funded research project). Instead, appointments reflect how R&S at Hope is inextricably linked to the

curriculum and to teaching. This policy is a core principle of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (approved by Senate in June 2013, revised and approved March 2015), and is designed to ensure that the curriculum is informed and influenced by current research and taught by research-active staff. Doctoral-level supervision is undertaken only by those who are active researchers with SRR in the specific area of their published research expertise.

Within Hope's Corporate Strategy, the University developed the 'Our People 2020' Personnel Support and Development Plan to help build on the significant advancements made since REF2014. The 'Our People 2020' Plan has a number of key facets. These include:

- A focus on creating effective compliance and performance frameworks and structures, creating staff development programmes and defining academic standards linked to recruitment and promotion activities. In essence, Our People 2020 reflects the current strength and maturity of the University and is fully aligned to the Corporate Strategy.
- A recognition that all staff have an important role to play in achieving the objectives of the University's Corporate Strategy and are valued members of its community. Staff are not just a 'resource' to achieve institutional ends but, rather, are encouraged to create a real community in which they are fully engaged.
- An outline of the critical staffing priorities for the University in forthcoming years. Fully-engaged staff, with appropriate skills, attitude, behaviours and professionalism required in the increasingly competitive higher education world, are key to ensure the excellence required.
- A policy of distributed leadership throughout the University with commensurate devolution of authority and resources. Each School/Department is challenged to implement its strategy to achieve the Plan's objectives.
- A platform for the University's REF return and overall Research Strategy including post-graduate supervision. It provides a programme of on-going skills training and other development opportunities underpinning the University's commitment to equality and diversity, student satisfaction, management and leadership, dealing with change, commercial awareness and other key corporate development aims.

The University has continued to build on the actions from its REF2014 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), with particular regard to communication and training. Principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded within Hope's mission and values. Hope has introduced mandatory on-line Equality and Diversity training for all staff as part of the University's ongoing commitment as a collegium to create a community where everyone can reach their potential.

As part of Hope's commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF, the University has implemented safe and supportive structures for staff to declare information about any equality-related circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively during the

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assessment period, especially their ability to produce research outputs at the same rate as other staff. As stated in Hope's REF2021 Code of Practice, the terms of reference of all of the University's committees include a responsibility to 'promote and monitor ethical practice and ensure all equality and diversity standards are adequately met'. Equality and Diversity training is provided on a regular basis to all staff members and is updated frequently to assist in fulfilling this responsibility.

Following feedback from Hope's Athena SWAN Bronze institutional application, the University has started working towards preparing a re-submission. Hope has also supported 46 women through the Aurora Women's Leadership Programme since the programme's inception in 2013. Eleven women are currently attending the programme and, of the 35 who have completed it, 19 have since been promoted internally and four externally.

A revamped 'Dignity at Work Framework' includes inter alia specific training on sexual harassment.

A survey on the experiences of BAME staff was carried out in Spring 2019. Overall, the findings of the survey do not indicate any particular areas of concern for staff members. Monitoring in this area will continue. The University will undertake further survey in summer 2021 to begin to assess whether any patterns or trends have emerged.

Hope continues to work towards eradicating the gender pay gap by implementing actions outlined in the University's 2017 and 2018 Gender Pay Gap Reports. The Personnel Department has undertaken an update exercise to improve the 'protected characteristics' data held on all staff.

The University's promotions processes have been amended to include consideration of individual circumstances for applicants. An improved Maternity Policy was introduced in 2014 which significantly enhanced the occupational pay elements of the provision.

Even while strictly quality-controlling PGR admissions during the current REF cycle, Hope's completion numbers rose to 97 by comparison with the 35 reported for REF2014. The emphasis has been quality-led, enhancing strengths in key research areas rather than growing numbers. To ensure that the PGRs receive a high-quality experience, the University has developed a Research Skills Programme (RSP) using the Vitae (VRDF) Framework. Some of the courses in the RSP are specifically designed to help students complete their research successfully, whilst others help to develop general skills to aid employability.

All PGRs have dedicated study space and computer facilities and are located as close to academic colleagues as possible. All PGRs have a Director of Studies who is their primary supervisor. In addition, and if deemed of benefit, an external advisor is also added to the supervisory team. Supervisory teams are also charged with ensuring PGR students make a broader contribution to

the research environment of the UoA by attending research seminars and supporting the activities of research groups and centres more generally. For example, it is an expectation that PGR students will train other students in specific technical and analytical skills gained while conducting their research. PGR students are expected to present their research at research group meetings where they receive informal feedback. They are also expected to present work at international conferences, as appropriate, in the later years of their studies. The School and University Research Committees support this. Student progress is reviewed annually by a panel chaired by the Director of Postgraduate Studies. PGR students are limited in how much they can tutor in line with RCUK guidelines.

As part of the University's R&SDP, Hope has introduced a Visiting and Professorial Fellowship scheme involving some 51 Visiting Professors, Honorary Research Fellows or Professorial Fellows across the University. Their role is to enhance the research environment and culture within each School. They have provided guidance on writing for publication and research proposals. A prime example of this strategy was the appointment of Professor Denise Barrett-Baxendale, Executive Chair of Everton in the Community and CEO of Everton Football Club, as Honorary Visiting Professorship for the project 'Sport Serving Humanity.' This led to a formal five-year research project funded by the Everton Football Club. One of the early projects involved Hope researchers working with Everton in the Community staff to provide detailed evidence of the social impact of the Club's charity within the city-region. The findings from this research enabled improved focusing of resources in areas that achieve the greatest social impact. This research was used as evidence for the Everton receiving Football Business Awards and 'Best Football Community Scheme.'

Since REF2014 the University has developed a mentorship programme specifically for Early Career Researchers (ECR's), involving Visiting Professors liaising with senior researchers within the University. This investment is central to Hope's research strategy; it has fostered growth in joint research projects and Seminar Series, increased funding streams to our research centres, and enhanced numerous staff development events over the last 5 years.

During this period, Hope also introduced a Consolidated Research Time (CRT) scheme with the intention of making periods of between one and six weeks available, on application, to academic colleagues to focus on a particular and specific research project, during which time teaching and administrative duties are reduced to a minimum or removed. During the current REF cycle, most staff have benefitted from at least one period of CRT for research.

In addition to the Professorial Fellowships, Mentorship Policy and CRT initiatives, the University has appointed to each UoA an external advisor to independently review research activities within

the UoA and to provide guidance and feedback on publications, lead workshops, and advise on the strength of its Impact Case Studies.

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Following Hope's success in REF2014, the University supplemented the QR funding in line with its planned strategy to build research infrastructure in terms of both buildings and people. In 2015/16 and 2016/17, using over £14.7m of University cash reserves, Hope invested in a new Sciences building housing STEM subject areas and Sports Science laboratories. This building, together with two floors of a repurposed tower block, contains enhanced specialist laboratory spaces dedicated to AI, robotics, engineering, nutrition, genomics, cell-biology and psychology; laboratories and space for sport and exercise science; a sports rehabilitation clinic; and state-of-the-art computer science, simulation, and HAPS labs/facilities. This facility has attracted industrial funding for clinical trials and has helped develop stronger links with the local NHS-hospitals and businesses.

The University has also invested over £6.5m into the Creative Campus, bringing overall investment in Hope's creative arts facilities to over £65m. The newly expanded Creative Campus site now includes state-of-the-art technology and performance spaces, including a new Arts Centre with new studio spaces for Fine and Applied Art. The presence of these excellent facilities has helped Hope to develop a number of collaborative partnerships with City Region cultural organisations including the Liverpool Philharmonic, Tate, National Museums Liverpool, Bluecoat, Everyman Theatre and FACT. This level of strategic investment and partnership-development has further enabled the University to expand research activity. The Creative Campus also houses as tenants and partners the European Opera Centre and Milapfest, Britain's leading Indian arts development trust; both have been involved in the University's research activity at the Creative Campus.

Hope does not place any restriction on Funding Type. The University's size, subject spread and staff demographic influence strategy on Funding sources. The University's best chance of Research Council funding success is by partnering with other universities, and this strategy has enabled Hope to achieve grant income during the current REF period from the AHRC, EPSRC, ESRC and NERC. Hope now has an increased range of Funders, and the quality of the University's outputs and impact demonstrates what can be achieved with this level of external funding when used appropriately.

It became apparent after REF2014 that the University could gain an advantage from more directed and strategic use of internal research funding with enhanced reporting of the outcomes of the investments made. This strategy was incorporated into the R&SDP. The University now has a suite of internal funding schemes: Research Centre Grants, Individual Research, Travel,

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Equipment, Major Research Project Application Preparation, Membership of key societies/associations, Publication funding, and Impact Activities. (During the current REF cycle, several impact-related internal funding opportunities were created, titled 'Route to Impact', 'REFlect', and 'REFine', to help with the development of impact case studies at various stages.) On successful completion of the internal award, it is expected that the individual staff member or collaborative team will apply for external funding to the external funder identified in their application.

At University level, the Research Facilitator (RF) (Colin Cooper) provides specialist research support. In this REF period (2017) he received two significant lifetime contribution awards in Research Management: the Carter Award from ARMA and the Chermiside award from SRAI. He offers guided workshops, internal review and developmental activities to enhance the University's funding portfolio and inter/multidisciplinary collaborations. He also provides guidance for academic staff in applying for external research funding and in the financial administration of projects. The RF tracks funding opportunities in all research areas, actively seeking collaborative links within academia and funding bodies, both nationally and internationally.

Hope has developed an in-house suite of systems (held on its intranet) to provide support to academic staff in their research endeavours and to facilitate accurate reporting and tracking of research activity. This includes an Academic Profile System (APS) that captures the research expertise and activity of all staff, enabling them to connect with colleagues who share similar research interests and form inter/multi-disciplinary approaches to research questions. The APS is also available to outside bodies so that they can search the research provision of the University. As the APS allows staff to store information about impact, including publications, activities, and evidence, it helps staff to draft case studies and collaborate with colleagues, as well as to access related case studies.

A team of 6 full-time Subject Librarians support the Schools and Departments by working closely with academic colleagues to support and advise on all areas of Library research provision. Liaison between Schools and the Library is fostered by the presence of librarians at School meetings and by day-to-day liaison via academic Library Representatives. There is a dedicated Postgraduate area in Hope's Sheppard-Worlock Library for taught and research postgraduate students.

The Subject Librarians, recognising the potential isolation faced by researchers, established the successful Summer Research Meetups to supplement year-round support.

In January 2019, a survey of academic use of social media for research purposes was conducted to ascertain the current level of use and current expertise at the University. Survey responses and subsequent consultation with existing high-profile users of social media resulted in the creation of

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a training programme, initially for Post Graduate researchers but extended to academic staff as well. This training is now embedded in the PGR skills programme.

The Collection Management and the Special Collections Management Policies see academic staff work closely with Subject Librarians. The OneSearch discovery tool provides access to a range of online research databases including multidisciplinary resources such as Science Direct and Academic Search Complete alongside specialist discipline and subject databases. OneSearch also encompasses Open Access resources such as Directory of Open Access Journals, full text journal resources (e.g., IEEE and ACM Digital libraries), and collections of e-books, newspapers, images, sound and video recordings. The University also subscribes to <https://www.papersinvited.com>, a ProQuest tool, to help researchers identify conferences in their areas of research and advertise their own conferences and events.

A Special Collections vault and reading room provides a dedicated space for the storage and consultation of medieval manuscripts, early printed books, folios, quartos and octavos of significant collections entrusted to Hope. The University has several special collections reflecting the subject spread across the campus, including the Gradwell, Radcliffe, Picton, John Henry Newman, Loughlin, Cornwell and Educational Research Collections. The University hold archives of particular importance such as the Nugent and Archbishop Stuart Blanch archives. Items from these collections have enhanced Hope's research reputation through inclusion in exhibitions undertaken with Liverpool Libraries including the Records Office and at events including British Science week and British Academy's Being Human Festival.

Hope's Institutional Research Archive (HIRA) holds all staff research outputs. The University is currently working to extend coverage to all doctoral theses.