

Institution: Norwich University of the Arts

Unit of Assessment: 32

1. Context and mission

- 1.1.1 Norwich University of the Arts (NUA) is a specialist art, design and media university with a 175-year history, gaining University title in December 2012. In 2019/20 the University enrolled 2360 Higher Education students studying for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research degrees, with 4% at postgraduate level. This represents an increase of 35% in the number of students since 2014. Students were supported by 78 academic staff (58.23 FTE) with full-time or fractional contracts, 89 academic staff (36.53 FTE) on part-time hourly lecturer contracts and 213 (166.82 FTE) professional services staff, including 65 (37.9 FTE) student facing staff (for example, supporting technical workshops, study skills, employability, student welfare).
- 1.1.2 NUA's campus comprises eleven buildings in the centre of Norwich, which have all undergone substantial refurbishment within the past ten years enhancing the environment of the city, including the pedestrianisation of St George Street housing two of our major buildings in the city's cultural quarter. In 2018 NUA won the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Award for Outstanding Estates Strategy and was one of three finalists in the 'Buildings that Inspire' category in The Guardian University Awards.
- 1.1.3 The University has two faculties within which undergraduate and taught postgraduate teams are managed (see Table 1). Since 2014, the portfolio of courses has developed, including the provision of BSc programmes. BA Fashion Communication and Promotion, and BA Visual Effects (VX) were introduced in 2015-16; BA Interior Design in 2016-17; BSc courses in Games Development and User Experience (UX) Design in 2017-18. BA programmes in Acting, and Fashion Marketing and Business commenced in 2010-21. Masters programmes include a mandatory cross-course 'Research into Practice' unit of study. A Masters programme in Games was added to the portfolio of taught postgraduate courses in 2015-16.
- 1.1.4 NUA was awarded Gold status under the Teaching Excellence Framework in 2019, reflecting the quality of teaching, workshop provision, technical support and facilities across the University's academic profile.

1.1.5 Table 1 Portfolio of NUA academic courses

Faculty of Arts & Media	Faculty of Design & Architecture
Undergraduate Programmes	Undergraduate Programmes
Acting (from 2020/21)	Architecture
Animation	Fashion
Film and Moving Image Production	Fashion Communication and Promotion
Fine Art	Fashion Marketing and Business (from 2020/21)
Games Art and Design	Graphics
Games Development (BSc)	Illustration
Photography	Interior Design
VFX (BSc)	Textile Design
Masters Programme	Masters Programme
Curation	Communication Design
Fine Art	Fashion
Games	Textile Design
Moving Image and Sound	
Photography	

1.2 University Mission

1.2.1 NUA’s mission in the period was to inspire creativity and originality, encourage ethical thinking and sustainable practice, and develop skills and expertise valued by industry today and tomorrow. *Our vision:* To be the UK’s leading university for creative thinkers, makers and designers. To be the industry’s first choice for innovation. To be a leading advocate for ethical thinking and sustainable creative practice. To be the UK’s leading university for creative thinkers, makers and designers. To be the industry’s first choice for innovation. *We value:* Creativity in all its forms; Our community and everyone’s contribution; Honesty and integrity; Diversity, equality and inclusion; Ambition in our staff and students; Innovation, challenging established ideas and practices.

1.2.2 Research and Knowledge Exchange is fundamental to our mission and is embedded within the Strategic Plan to be an inclusive community, transforming lives and creating sustainable futures.

2. Strategy

2.1 Research Strategy 2015-2020

2.2 Following the submission to REF 2014 the University undertook a review of its research focus, including extensive consultation with staff, to identify themes that would reflect and incorporate the range of research activity undertaken and planned for the period 2015-2020.

2.3 The Research Strategy reflects a specialist academic culture that aims to encourage and support world-leading, topical research that redefines the boundaries of the creative disciplines, supports innovation and entrepreneurialism, and leads to demonstrable educational, cultural and economic benefits for society.

2.4 The **objectives** of the Research Strategy 2015-2020 were:

- To further NUA's specialist mission by raising the profile of research within and beyond the University
- To identify entry points into research discourses across and beyond the University for colleagues new to this approach to creative practice
- To discover new ways to articulate and expose innovations in thought, practice, processes and materials fostered in the University's studios, workshops and classrooms, and to engage new colleagues by providing various entry points into research discourses
- To leverage the specialist expertise, resources and networks contained within the University with the aim of developing new academic and industry partnerships that will enhance its research environment and reputation for innovation in the creative disciplines
- To support staff and students in their efforts to critically engage with, and ultimately take ownership of debates about new forms of research that resonate regionally, nationally and internationally

2.4 The strategy identifies three NUA Research Themes: **Created and Contested Territories; Human Interfaces; Pattern and Chaos**, each with a Research Group that reflects cross-course and cross-faculty communities of practice.

2.5 The University recognises the significance of the relationship between research and knowledge exchange in supporting staff career development, in developing sustainable external partnerships and in ensuring the currency of teaching and its relevance to employability. NUA research generates innovation, knowledge exchange and teaching; it is also sustained by these activities.

2.6 Since 2014 NUA has reinforced the relationship between the research and the business and enterprise teams. The Director of Innovation and Engagement is a member of Research Committee. The Director of Research or Senior Research Manager and Director of Innovation and Engagement analyse the research and knowledge exchange potential of all external facing projects and work together to foster productive long-term external collaborations. In future, the teams will share staff to support external funding applications, partnership/ contract development and project management. This positive relationship has resulted in a number of projects that include research, student engagement and consultancy activities. Employability support from the Business and Enterprise team is

integrated into all student knowledge exchange projects, overseen by NUA academic staff. This model won the Times Higher award for innovation in enterprise education in 2014.

- 2.7 The University is a member of GuildHE Research, the research consortium for smaller and specialist higher education institutions. This organisation is a collegiate peer-to-peer network of 30 comparable institutions that supports its members to embed a positive research culture, develop robust research and innovation strategies, and establish appropriate infrastructure through which they can drive forward their ambitions. 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 their research.

Details of the delivery of the Research Themes of the NUA Research Strategy 2015-2020 are provided in REF5b, section 1.

3. People

- 3.1 The Human Resources Strategy 2016-2021 seeks to promote excellence in human resource management and development by addressing four key aims:

- Attract and retain academic and professional services staff of the highest calibre
- Invest in progressive staff development that supports individual professional development and strategic priorities
- Build and support high quality leadership and excellent management in the University
- Champion Equality and Diversity and Wellbeing

- 3.2 The Strategy incorporates the objectives and actions of the University's Single Equality Scheme on the profile of the workforce and the student body. Human Resources supports a culture of continuous improvement and ensures that training and development activities are linked to the University priorities, including providing support and guidance on career and succession planning to assist line managers and staff to have the skills to achieve their ambitions and career path.

- 3.3 Staff development is managed by a Director of Human Resources and monitored through annual staff appraisal and development reviews. All new staff are provided with a timely induction to the University with the aim of creating a sense of belonging and, with the support of a mentor, are integrated into their role and the NUA community. The delivery of the Human Resources Strategy, and progress against the targets and actions are monitored by the University Senior Management Team and University Council. The Strategy highlights the importance of research development opportunities to build up research skills, capacity and competence alongside a sustainable research culture.

- 3.4 In 2019 the University introduced three Academic Excellence Pathways for academic staff in order to recognise, reward and develop the range of skills and expertise staff contribute to the life of the University:

- Knowledge Exchange Pathway
- Research Pathway
- Teaching and Student Engagement Pathway

- 3.5. The Pathways were developed with group and individual consultation with all academic staff. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive from academic staff at all stages of their career and across the range of subject areas. Staff indicated that the Pathways would enable their activity in the areas of knowledge exchange and teaching innovation & student engagement to be acknowledged and validated by the University, as well as the established support and development for research. Key elements of the Pathways project were that staff self-designated to a pathway according to criteria for each; that designation should reflect the balance of activity for staff on teaching and research contracts; that designation should be reviewed at annual staff appraisal and development reviews.
- 3.6. The initial stage of the Pathways project was managed by the Academic Pathways Steering Group, reporting to Senior Management Team, which reviewed the operation of the Pathways in January 2020. Subsequently the strategy and operation of the pathways has been undertaken by the Academic Pathways Monitoring Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic. The Academic Pathways are an important part of the University's academic staffing strategy, particularly to develop parity for career development and support across each of the pathways.
- 3.7. The University recognises that staff who designate to the Teaching and Student Engagement or Knowledge Exchange pathways may also aspire to meet the criteria for the Research pathway as part of their career development, to plan for Significant Responsibility for Research. From 2020/21 these staff can elect to join the University's Emerging Researcher programme at their annual appraisal and development review (ADR), which will qualify them for research mentoring support and emerging researcher development events. Importantly, all academic staff are expected to attend Research and Knowledge Exchange days and are encouraged to join and participate in a NUA Research Group. All academic staff can apply for Research Support Funding and for Research Sabbatical Leave; these are not solely focused on staff on the Research Pathway.
- 3.8. Since 2014 NUA has established a framework to support staff and reward their career achievements in research and teaching innovation and leadership. We have introduced criteria and a process for awarding Emerging Researcher and NUA Early Career Researcher status and a programme to support these staff. There are criteria and an application process for the appointment and awarding of Associate Professor, Professor and Emeritus Professor title, overseen by the Professoriate and Honorary Awards Committee, chaired by the Vice Chancellor.
- 3.9. In 2015 the University introduced three research funding schemes to support individual and group research activity, including a research sabbatical leave scheme. Research students have access to two dedicated funding schemes to support their research, training and professional development.
- 3.10. NUA Research is led and coordinated by the research team, including the Director of Research, the Research Theme Champions, Research Administrator, Senior Research Professor (0.2 fte), Senior Research Manager, Research Fellow.

3.11 Leadership of Research has been somewhat interrupted [text removed for publication]. The University appointed a Director of Research with professorial title for the first time in November 2014. [text removed for publication]. In interim periods NUA Research was directed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic and continued to be supported by the Research Group Champions and an experienced Research Administrator. A Senior Research Professor supported the team from January 2018 and a Senior Research Manager was introduced from February 2019.

Details of research staffing support and development are provided in REF5b, section 2.

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

4.1. NUA has a wide range of resources and facilities that support staff and students, and which contribute to the cultural and economic life of the city, including the EAST Gallery^{NUA}, the Ideas Factory^{NUA}, an incubation space for digital start-ups, the University Collection and Archives, lecture theatres, studios and digital spaces with high-end equipment and software. The research office is housed in two rooms on the ground floor of Francis House with administrative support for research students, staff research, research projects and research events. <https://www.nua.ac.uk/university-life/facilities/>

4.2 The University has 12 specialist workshops and studios to support teaching, student learning, research and knowledge exchange, including Architecture and Interior Design, Printmaking, Fashion, Textiles, User Experience/Interaction Design and Games Development, Printing, Scanning & laser cutting, The Sir John Hurt film studio, and The Munnings Drawing Studio. These are supported by teams of expert and specialist workshop managers and technicians. Technical workshop staff are encouraged to attend Research Group meetings and are supported when involved in research projects and collaborations with NUA academic researchers (for example, Archer with Dunleavy and Hanna).

4.3 Housed in the Duke Street Building, a remodelled 19th century school building, the Library has over 36,000 printed volumes, mainly devoted to arts, architecture, design and media subjects. Alongside the collection of books and subscriptions to over 400 journal titles, the Library contains a variety of media including:

- ebooks (424,000)
- exhibition catalogues
- graphic design yearbooks
- computer application guides
- computer games (131)
- animated and feature films (2,974)

A librarian is allocated to support research students. The Library and Learning Support team run a programme of inductions and information sessions for students at all levels, including research and referencing skills.

Details of NUA's research income, infrastructure and facilities are provided in REF5b, section 3.