

<b>Institution: Ravensbourne University London</b>
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<b>1. Context and mission</b>
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**1.1 Context**

Ravensbourne received TDAP and University status May 2018. Its predecessor, the Bromley School of Art, was founded in 1878 and became Bromley College of Art after World War II. Following a merger in 1959 with the Department of Furniture Design of Beckenham School of Art, Ravensbourne moved from Bromley to Chislehurst. The campus moved to a new [Riba Award winning \(2011\)](#) building on the Greenwich Peninsula in 2010 and will shortly open a newly designed [Institute of Creativity and Technology](#), in early 2021.

This submission will be the first undertaken by Ravensbourne, and we have ensured that the last seven years has laid the essential foundations to build a sustainable research community aligned to our strong partnership with the creative industries. We currently have 140 academics of whom 22 (FTE 18.2) are classed as Category A SRR (approx. 15% of total academic staff). We are also developing a partnership programme for establishment of our new doctoral provision, and investment in a new capital building to house research within an Institute for Creativity and Technology.

Ravensbourne also hosts more than 60 creative technology SMEs within its [Incubation+ unit](#). The unit utilises leading edge technologies and media resources and collaborates with the student body and industry partners. Industry incubation, postgraduate provision and the Research Office will be key occupants of the new Institute. It will provide innovative space and state of the art facilities to encourage interconnections, engagement and entrepreneurship driven by a strong practice-led and applied research strategy.

**1.2 Mission**

The University set out its Mission in its [Institutional Strategy 2018-25](#) as follows:

*Be creative*

We provide a provocative, dynamic learning environment where students are challenged to become visionary professionals of the future. Working collaboratively and purposefully, we approach our endeavours with a mind-set that is open and receptive to challenge. We empower our staff and students not just to imagine, but also to create, the future.

*Be integrated with industry*

We value a rich and sustained engagement with our industry partners. This drives our practice-based approach to learning and teaching, research and knowledge exchange. We support creative leadership and innovation through partnerships, conversations and connections with industry, and the diversity of our governing body. These reflect the professional and collaborative nature of our staff and the employability of our students.

*Be inclusive*

We take pride in a culture that anticipates, supports and celebrates equality of opportunity. Reflecting the diversity of our local community, we are proactive and holistic in our approach to promoting social mobility, internationalisation, and inclusion, enabling change beyond Ravensbourne, to the socio-economic and ethnic profile of practitioners in the creative industries.

Within this strategy, under the aim of Academic Excellence, the approach to research was outlined: Academic excellence in the learning, teaching, research and knowledge exchange of design, media, communication and technology through the development of new educational models for HE and industry (Academic Strategy, p. 18).

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In taking this approach we focus on two core objectives:

1. To grow our applied research offer from its current small scale, aligning it closely to our core teaching strengths, delivering increased return on investment, a greater influence of research on our teaching, and purposeful collaborations with industry-leaders and other institutions with complementary skills and industry footprints.
2. To create a facility to catalyse innovation in creativity and technology and add value to our core education provision, applied research activity and industry interactions.

### 2. Strategy

Ravensbourne began developing its research strategy, infrastructure and Research Office from 2014 in anticipation of TDAP. During this period, the University has invested in and developed a set of research roles (See People section) to lead and support research staff, collaborative projects and promote good practice. They oversee and manage major funding bids undertaken by the institution, and provide essential support for researcher development and training.

#### 2.1 Research Strategy 2018-2025

A major outcome of establishing our new research infrastructure was the institution's first [Research Strategy](#). This laid out our thematic priorities and close alignment to industry practice and applied research ambitions. It also laid out our current and future themes on:

- Smart cities
- Immersive film and narrative
- Virtual and augmented reality
- Wearables
- Digital pedagogy

These themes are underpinned by five principles that will ensure the continued development and growth of research at Ravensbourne:

- Fostering a new research culture at Ravensbourne amongst staff and students
- Embedding Ravensbourne in sector-wide research and development networks
- Encouraging applied and practice-based research
- Enhancing Ravensbourne's reputation as an originator of new research
- Innovating with technology in society

#### 2.2 Key elements of research support

As our Research Office (RO) is relatively small they work in close partnership with HR and key academic RO members to develop and mentor early career researchers with a view to building their profile and outputs. This includes dedicated provision for research time, travel and conferences, along with PhD funding and time allowances. All staff utilise the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, which we will be formally adopting this year.

All staff are encouraged to present at peer-reviewed conferences; write significant publications; work in partnership with other collaborators; develop funding proposals; and expand their research portfolios and profile.

Internal funding schemes have produced significant strategic projects in the last 6 years, also encouraging academics to build the competencies and skills required for locating, writing and delivering on external funding for research. Formal training sits alongside a strong peer to peer

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network of support, mentoring and review, ensuring that ECRs and senior academics are co-supporting career development and progression through regular appraisal.

### 2.3 Delivering the 2018 Research Strategy

Ravensbourne has broadened the range of academics involved at all levels in research, through the support mechanisms outlined above. Although this is our first submission, we have made a significant step change in establishing a meaningful relationship between applied research and practice. Our strategy has enabled us to build strong foundations that deliver excellence in research, as well as closely informing the shape of our unique curriculum offer with industry.

In this period we were in receipt of over £300K from the EU; staff have participated in high-profile exhibitions, conferences and symposia; and our range of research outputs spans practice-based portfolios, journal papers, books and chapters. We have successfully collaborated with industrial partners and applied the results of research in our teaching, ensuring student engagement in research as a key skillset.

### 2.5 Goals for the post-2021 period

Our key goal is that Ravensbourne's [Corporate Strategy](#) guide our research towards informing and innovating advanced technical and creative education and pedagogy with the specific remit to transform the future creative industry economy.

This will be reflected in research themes that draw on existing expertise in immersive environments and augmented reality, with an expanded focus on educational methodologies, industry advancements and innovations in creative practice. More broadly, we seek to bring pedagogical research to the fore, building on successful initiatives that emerged from previous EU-funded projects, including [WEKIT](#) and [AR-FOR-EU](#). Our current submission is reflective of the foundations needed to build our future research programmes. We intend to align our career framework, recruitment and reward and recognition schemes to reflect this ambition.

A new Research Strategy will be drafted that seeks to build upon our social, commercial and cultural links within place, namely the Greenwich, Woolwich and Thamesmead areas; whilst deepening our collaborations with selected partners in London, UK regions and internationally. This will also respond to the need for knowledge exchange with industry, and commercialisation of projects emerging from within Ravensbourne. Our cultural profile and engagement with creative sector institutions, especially in the University's established areas of excellence such as film and media, will also be prioritised for major research bids, collaborations and horizon scanning.

Specific aims for the Research Office are as follows:

- To raise the overall quantity and quality profile of outputs likely to reach 3\* and above in the next REF;
- To build lasting international collaborations on the basis of our strong successes in EU and structural funding
- To ensure the [Repository](#) (established in 2019) is further invested and developed, and that open access is central to raising the visibility and accessibility of our research
- To ensure that research data is held securely and in full accordance with GDPR, as mandated by our Privacy Officer and research data policies [link TBC]
- To ensure Research Integrity by further developing our guidelines on good practice, research ethics and misconduct, under the guidance of the Research Committee
- To ensure that impact is prioritised and supported by the Research Office, including collation of evidence
- To dedicate more staff time to the production of impactful research
- To raise the profile of Ravensbourne research both within and outside the University

- To connect our students more closely with research outcomes and programmes

## 2.6 Building our research collaborations

The University has appointed Visiting Professors, including Alison Shreeve and Stephen Scrivener, and advisors who have enhanced our research through exchange of best practice, expertise and knowledge across institutions. This will be continued in a more targeted fashion from 2021 onwards by investing in, and appointing, Visiting Professors aligned to thematic priorities also reinforcing new industry partnerships. These visiting roles will span both academia and industry professionals, in order to unite applied research and professional practice.

## 3. People

### 3.1 Recruitment

The University has benefitted from attracting research-active staff since 2018, and recognition of practice-based and applied research during the recruitment of new academics has been essential. We aim to grow the proportion of research-active academics to 20% overall by 2025, with the majority continuing to bring practice-based research firmly into teaching practices, pedagogy and industry engagement. This will also be reinforced across recruitment, retention and promotion strategies, where recognition of research in teaching contracts will be promoted and made explicit in recruitment opportunities for academic posts.

### 3.2 Pathways and progression

From 2019 onwards, the University has supported teaching and research contracts for staff who can demonstrate significant research engagement as per our Code of Practice. We support three pathways: teaching only, research and teaching, and research only. There is progression from Associate to Senior Lecturer to Course Leader and the career pathway for research also extends to recognition of professorial progression across all pathways. At present, the research only roles are either tied to funded projects or established by direct appointment, but recognised as essential to building the research environment going forward.

### 3.3 Health, Wellbeing and general Staff Development

The University operates a Flexible Working Policy to maintain a healthy work-life balance and several schemes for training and personal development managed in conjunction with line managers and our HR department. There are also several areas of support for CPD, including undertaking additional professional qualifications in house and externally; mentoring and coaching; and a range of health and wellbeing initiatives, including mental health resources and in-house fitness, mindfulness and short courses.

### 3.4 Staff Development for researchers

From its inception in 2014, the Research Office has delivered research skills workshops for emerging and established researchers based on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDP), covering topics such as presentation, publication, developing and managing funded projects, impact and engagement. These have been bolstered by external guests, the annual Staff Conference, and opportunities for staff to engage with peers through events organised by bodies such as GuildHE Research. A proportion of the staff supported are ECRs, and also emerging researchers who may not yet have full SRR or status as independent researchers (such as staff who are currently doctoral candidates).

### 3.5 Research Students

At present, Ravensbourne's only PGRs are members of academic staff studying for doctorates at other institutions. The University funds 50% of their fees and grants time in lieu to pursue their studies; such staff are also encouraged to engage with others in the research community to share knowledge about the PhD process. We are receiving a portion of a £100K annual investment from

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Brandmovers International towards the first PhDs (in terms of funded fees and some additional support), and are looking to start with up to 5 PhDs in the first year.

We are at an advanced stage with a new validation for a joint PhD programme with the University of East London, based on their [successful collaboration with Rose Bruford College](#). UEL also supports practice-based PhDs that align well with the creative and digital sector, and has proved supportive of our aims for a small initial intake in the late 2021/early 2022 timeframe.

Ravensbourne has at least 10 current or potential PhD supervisors amongst its staff, and alongside this, UEL will provide established doctoral supervision training tailored to the needs of our practice-based research community. It is our aim that by 2026 we will have an established track record that lays the foundations for joint partnership as an independent doctoral provider.

As part of this collaboration, Ravensbourne is adopting recognised policies and procedures, and will be running our students through their ethics modules; and taking best practice in research governance from this more established institution.

### 4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

From 2014 onwards, the University invested in building a dedicated research team prior to the award of TDAP, and in preparation for the REF. Initially the Research Office consisted of 1 full-time and 2 part-time staff (2 FTE) and 1 full-time Director of the Learning Technology Research Centre (LTRC). As a result of expansion and successful funding bids, there are now 2.8 FTE staff in the RO, and 2.8 FTE in LTRC, with a further 1 FTE on an ESF project. This expansion has also resulted in more administrative support from HR and Finance. The RO coordinates the development of research-active staff; bid development and management; development of partnerships and collaborations; engagement with peers at sector organisations, other HEIs and businesses; and with governmental organisations and international bodies.

In late 2019, Ravensbourne appointed Professor Lawrence Zeegen Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Enterprise, who leads on the Research Office activities and has been actively developing the new [Institute for Creativity and Technology](#). This purpose-built structure in the Design District of North Greenwich combines research, incubation, the postgraduate school, the Creative Lab for student/industry partnerships and our print workshops, with enhanced facilities for digital and physical collaboration, and a dedicated Immersive and Augmented Reality lab for LTRC. At least £1.9m plus £1m support in kind has been invested in the new Institute which is scheduled to open in May 2021, with a forecast of £2m income and support in kind in the first 3 years of operation.

Research income 2015-2020 averaged £100k per annum, mainly from European grants (FP7, Horizon 2020, ERASMUS+, Interreg NW and ESF). Smaller bids from sources including the Arts Council and NESTA were won by individual academics. Our 2018 Research Strategy aimed to continue our success with European grants whilst also diversifying towards other sources, including industrial and charity funding. This research would result in both academic outputs and impacts in the public sphere.

#### *Research income 2015 – 2020*

2015:	£19000
2016/17:	£112000
2017/18:	£118000
2018/19:	£45000
2019/20:	£131000

This totals £425K, roughly equivalent to £23,350 per FTE of our research academics.

The RO's support for researchers includes training in bid writing and we will ensure that at least one bid per FTE is submitted within a two year cycle. The Director of Research and the Director of LTRC have brought in a significant share of the funding, but other colleagues have also been successful.

The University also invested in the research repository; in research publications database such as JSTOR; in memberships of sector research organisations and professional memberships for RO staff; and funding of staff projects by means of annual competitive research funds from 2015 onwards. These small and medium grants up to £30k were intended to kickstart projects and generate larger funding bids. The University's support for its incubation unit has also resulted in important cross-collaborations between research and SMEs housed internally, and with companies in the wider Greenwich area.

Some of our most significant projects included:

*2017 AR4EU (Code Reality) c.£300K (Ravensbourne €60,000)*

Educational offers in Europe (and globally) for Augmented Reality (AR) are falling behind and failing to produce the graduates required today by one of fastest growing industries in the world. AR-4-EU will help to prepare professionals for the creative and digital industries of tomorrow and contribute to making European economies more research-intensive, knowledge-based, and competitive within the global digital market. Duration: 3 years starting Sept/Oct 2017

Project website: <http://codereality.net/>

*2018 MoneyLab UK Government - Money Advice Service Grant: £94,723*

The MoneyLab was a one-year project designed by Ravensbourne and funded by the Money Advice Service. Its aim was to explore the impact a co-creation project can have on the attitudes and behaviours of young adults in Higher Education. The intervention was a series of active engagement activities and workshop modules directly exploring the student experience around financial capabilities. This was based on the principle of students as 'co-creators' in order to better understand students' financial awareness, capabilities and managing financial challenges on a day-to-day basis.

*2018 Interreg NW EYES: Total Funds €4,277,312 (Ravensbourne €288,725)*

EYES develops, tests and implements a new methodology for NWE cities to promote youth entrepreneurship/employment for NEETs aged 15- 34 years. The method will use digital tools and personal coaches to make NEETs develop their entrepreneurial skills such that they feel encouraged to make use of regular business and employment support schemes offered in the participating cities (which they would not consider using otherwise). By doing this, EYES turns entrepreneurial education into a feasible and scalable instrument of regional policy to bring NEETs back to the NWE labour market. Duration 36 months – extended into 2022 due to COVID

**Institutional collaborations** include partnerships with Amazon Web Services; with Brandmovers International; the University of Greenwich for the EYES Interreg NW project and funding bids; London South Bank University for the DAGILE project and structural bids; the BBC for our new Motion Graphics Archive; the Royal Shakespeare Company for digital television and online platforms; the GLA as funders; The Culture Capital Exchange for funding bids and peer connections; with the Royal Borough of Greenwich and Visit Greenwich for knowledge exchange; with the City of Hamburg and Ministry of Culture Hamburg; with University of Colorado at Boulder and Ontario College of Art & Design University for KE and staff exchanges; with Social Enterprise Mark for funding projects; and with GuildHE Research, CHEAD, ImmerseUK and London Higher for professional networks. Cambridge Wireless on communications technologies; and the Digital Catapult.