

<b>Institution: Solent University</b>	
<b>Context and mission</b>	
<i><b>Who we are and our direction of travel</b></i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Solent</a> is a relatively young university. We have made rapid progress on our developmental journey to becoming research-informed and research-active. This has been driven by our recognition that, as we are still maturing, we have an opportunity to build an environment in which our researchers are central to what we do and are supported, valued and celebrated throughout their careers.</li> <li>2. We set ourselves a series of ambitious targets designed to capture and build on this developmental moment and its momentum. Our mission for <a href="#">2015-2020</a> was to make a step-change in our commitment to research.</li> <li>3. The result is reflected in our REF 2021 submission, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission to three Units of Assessment (UoA) – 20, 24 and 34 (20 for the first time)</li> <li>• Six impact case studies based on research ranging from <a href="#">Agatha Christie</a> to <a href="#">Chinese seafarers' rights</a></li> <li>• 134 outputs submitted by 57 staff (54.83 FTE)</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Our progress is also clear from our current <a href="#">projects</a> and activities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The Assessment of Physical and Economic Coastal Vulnerability of South Asia</a> (supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The Implementation of Ship Hybridisation</a> (supported by the European Regional Development Fund)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Ports Energy and Carbon Savings</a> (supported by the European Regional Development Fund)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The Intelligent Ship Centre</a> (supported by the Department of Transport)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	
<i><b>Our development plan</b></i>	
5. The table below outlines how we made our step-change.	
<b><u>Solent Research Development Timeline 2015 - 2020</u></b>	
<b>2014</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Research &amp; Enterprise Officer role created</li> </ul>
<b>2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Research, Innovation and Enterprise role created</li> <li>• Strategy for 2015-20 released, embedding research as a key Solent priority</li> <li>• Solent Research &amp; Innovation sub-strategy 2015-20 published</li> <li>• Research and Innovation Office founded</li> </ul>
<b>2016</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of Research Hubs</li> <li>• Introduction of School research leads</li> <li>• Launch of the Researcher Development Programme (RDP)</li> <li>• Investment in the PURE research management information system</li> </ul>
<b>2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solent awarded Research Degree Awarding Powers</li> <li>• Investment in Post-Doctoral Researcher and Research Fellow posts</li> </ul>
<b>2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of the Research Career Pathway and Allocated Workload Planning</li> </ul>

2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sabbatical policy introduced</li> <li>• Introduction of Professional Doctorates</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of and appointment to the role of Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research &amp; Knowledge Exchange (PVC R&amp;KE)</li> <li>• Strategy for 2020-25 released, including research as a core theme</li> </ul>

**Strategy**

6. Our strategic aim for 2015-2020 was to provide our researchers with the tools they needed to be successful and competitive and to establish mechanisms through which Solent’s expertise and analysis could be brought into the public forum. By 2020, we aimed to be recognised and distinguished by our focus on the translation of knowledge into societal and economic benefit and our engagement with local communities and businesses.
7. The result was a framework through which we have established research as a core pillar of Solent’s activities. Since REF 2014 we have achieved:
  - Grant capture of £1,362,000
  - Publication of 411 articles in peer-reviewed journals
  - Award of 38 Research Degrees
  - Employment of 18 postdoctoral researchers and 5 research fellows
8. We built this framework by ensuring that our Strategy was designed at the highest level within the University, with detailed and ongoing input from across our research community, from our doctoral students and early career researchers (ECRs) to our Deans. This meant we could set and measure ourselves against ambitious and objectives. Our approach to Strategy design and its objectives is outlined below.

***Design and implementation***

9. Solent’s research strategy is designed, instigated and overseen at the institutional level. Three committees, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) and the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), report to the Academic Board and maintain oversight of research across the University.
10. The Strategy’s implementation and effectiveness are monitored by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), which is chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and on which the PVC R&KE sits.
11. The strategy is further developed and implemented at a thematic level. Our themes were initially encompassed within four broad Research Hubs: Business and Society; Creative and Digital Industries; Maritime, Technology and Environment; and Sport, Health and Wellbeing.
12. The Research Hubs were an important step in establishing an institutional focus on fostering existing and emergent areas of research strength. From them, four thematic areas emerged, allowing us to disband the Hubs. Our research is now focused in four areas broadly aligned the UoAs we have set as our initial targets for REF 2027 (7, 20, 24 and 34).
13. From 2020, strategy development also takes places at the [Faculty and School](#) level, within the Faculties of: Sport, Health, and Social Sciences; Creative Industries, Architecture and Engineering; and Business, Law and Digital Technologies; and within the Warsash Maritime School. These each reflect and strategically complement our traditional

disciplinary strengths, as well as encompassing and encouraging multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research.

**Objectives, activities and achievements**

14. The 2015-2020 strategy was built around eight objectives. As detailed below, we have made substantial progress against each objective.

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activities and achievements</b>
1	Secure research degree-awarding powers	Achieved: August 2017
2	Improve infrastructure through the Research and Innovation Office	Achieved: Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) Office established: 2015 RIE team provides: policies, procedures, pre- and post-award support, project management support, support for impact development and measurement, IP support, open access, open data, research integrity, ongoing implementation of the Concordats to Support the Career Development of Researchers Research Integrity. RIE team member sat on the writing group for the 2019 revision of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.
3	Establish a strong focus for research and innovation in each School	Achieved: through the introduction of School research leads, School doctoral student co-ordinators, dedicated internal RIKE funding as pump priming for research
4	Develop cross-institutional research groups based on interdisciplinary areas and addressing real world issues	Achieved: Research Hubs were established in 2016 to nurture cross-institutional collaborative research. 18 post-doctoral researchers employed since 2016
5	Improve performance in the next REF and enhance Solent's position in the research league table	Achieved: Submission of 54.83 FTE to three UoAs has been supported by the development of a website section on REF, provision of REF briefings during annual RDP, introduction of the research pathway, intra-School peer review and mentoring systems, and sabbaticals.
6	Improve Solent's external reputation for research and innovation and maximise external research income from the LEP, Research Councils UK, charities, Government departments and the European Union	Achieved: for example, the Gender, Empowerment and Multicultural Crews project was shortlisted for THE Research Project of the Year in Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences. Implementation of the Concordats for Engaging the Public with Research Open Research Data are both regularly review
7	Require research-informed teaching and student engagement in research	Achieved: for example, through appointment of a Professor of Research Informed Teaching, participation in the British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR) and engagement in the British Association for Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES)
8	Strengthen the University's overall performance in research and innovation	Achieved: through ongoing development of annual RDP, improvement in HE-BCI indicators,

	investment in pump priming funding and the PURE research management information system (RIMS)
--	---

### ***Development and next steps***

15. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we maintained our research environment by supporting the innovative ways our researchers and PGR students found to move their activities online. Where this was not possible, we provided supports, such as extensions to deadlines, and Covid-19-safe working environments. Communication was key to achieving this, and we have learned valuable lessons which will feed into our research environment as we move forward.

16. Our [2020-2025 strategy](#) builds on the achievements of the 2015-2020 strategy and continues to set ambitious objectives, actions and targets for [research and knowledge exchange](#).

17. Key elements of our strategy for research include:

- The appointment of a Pro Vice Chancellor of Research and Knowledge Exchange in August 2020
  - The PVC R&KE will provide strategic research leadership.
- The establishment of multi- and interdisciplinary teams led by senior academic staff.
  - Each team will focus on a UoA area in which Solent's strengths are concentrated, providing mentoring and development opportunities for staff and research students at all levels of their studies and careers.
- Each UoA who will have a leader responsible for progressing for submission in the next REF supported by researchers with unit specific research interests. The launch of the Solent Graduate School
  - The School will improve and formalise our training programme for postgraduate research (PGR) students and provide a supportive environment for both students and supervisors.
  - This will include delivery of new taught modules leading to a PG Certificate award for PGR students.
  - The Executive Board has already approved PhD bursaries. Each of the Units will be awarded fully paid bursaries for the period between REF 2021 and the next REF.
- Enhanced provision of staff development opportunities and time for research and knowledge exchange activities, research mentoring, and improved governance arrangements, underpinned by external review.
  - The infrastructural focus on research will provide both the support for research activities, as well as the flexibility to develop individual plans to promote research driven career development, at all levels of University.

18. We will build on our research mentoring arrangements, underpinned by research time allowances and sabbaticals, and closely monitor their impacts on outputs and income. We will ensure that the benefits of our research are felt by industry, local communities and more widely, through our digital presence and strong networks. We will build a comprehensive research database of the individual research and knowledge exchange plans of academic staff, make the best use of RIMS, and build a Research Dashboard to monitor progress in all research-related activities. The Strategy highlights the need for successful negotiation of interdependencies with academic and professional support in the

University. Together these initiatives will drive and grow Solent's research environment and help build our research impact.

## People

### ***Research staffing***

19. We recognise that the experiences and development of our research staff are central to a thriving research environment. Our focus is on four key areas: recruitment, development, recognition, and equality and diversity, as detailed below.

#### Recruitment

20. We have taken a strategic approach to recruitment. Requirements for academic appointments now include specific research-related experience (appropriate to career stage). These are assessed at interview and are central to appointment decisions.

21. As a result, since 2017, Solent has employed 18 ECRs and 5 research fellows.

#### Development

22. A dedicated Research Office, headed by a newly appointed Director of Research, Innovation & Enterprise, was founded in 2015. Three staff were employed, focussing on post-graduate research degree administration, bid management and researcher training and development.

23. To meet the increasing demands of the rapidly growing research focus, the Research Office now has a further four roles focussed on research integrity, research information systems, REF administration and research project management. Following the appointment of the PVC R&KE, further developments in research support are planned as our research activities continue to grow.

24. We encourage academic staff to undertake research qualifications as appropriate. Since 2013, 45 colleagues have commenced or attained a research degree.

25. Solent is committed to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, underlining its continuing work towards improving employment and support for researchers and research careers.

26. The University is also a member of GuildHE Research, the research consortium for smaller and specialist higher education institutions. This 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 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, including an annual doctoral summer school, training events, and opportunities to forge new projects and communicate their research.

27. This commitment to our researchers is also reflected in our annual [Researcher Development Programme](#). Launched in 2016 and facilitated by the Research Office, the RDP is based on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and provides a range of

on-line resources and training sessions on research skills development to doctoral students and academic staff.

28. Since 2016, over 2,900 staff and students have attended training sessions and events covering areas including: doctoral supervision, research integrity, research methods, funding and bidding guidance and maximising impact. The programme is responsive to participant feedback and has evolved as demand has increased. It is highly valued by participants, with 99% of respondents to a 2018/19 survey indicating that the sessions they had attended were useful for their professional development.

#### Recognition

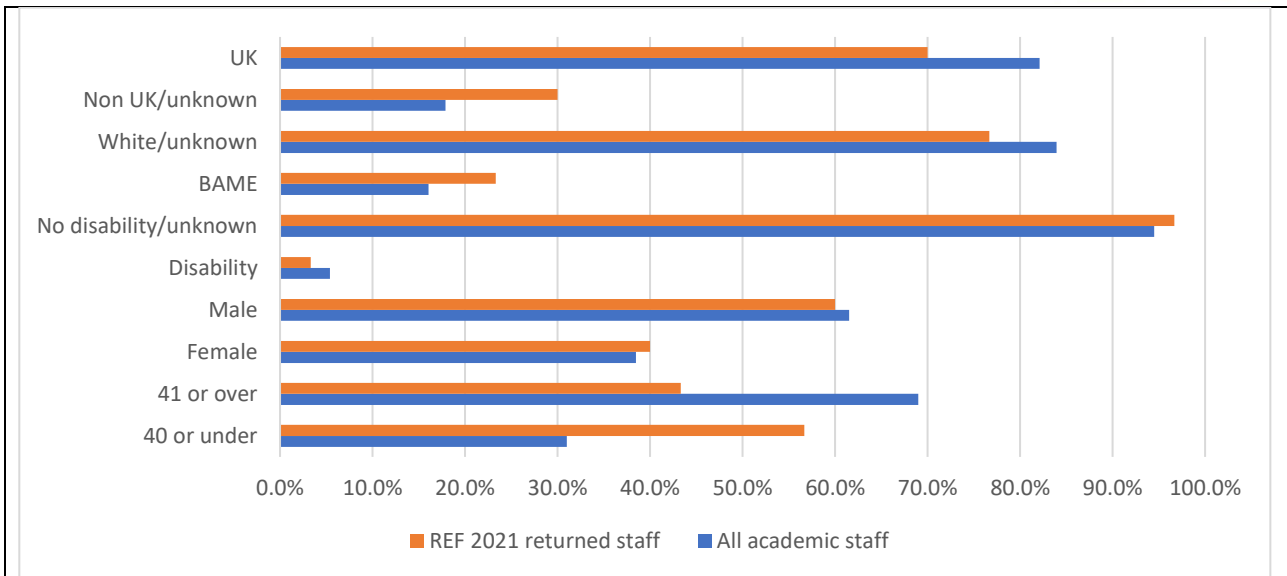
29. The research career pathway was introduced 2018. This ensures that academic staff are allocated dedicated time for furthering their research activities through Allocated Workload Planning (AWP). All those on the pathway were initially allocated 300 hours. From 2021 onwards, allocation of hours will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it is appropriate to researchers' activities and plans.
30. Applications to the research pathway are encouraged and are considered annually. Similarly, those on the pathway are encouraged to apply for promotion within it, with applications assessed yearly.
31. In 2019, this commitment to research active staff was further supported by the introduction of a sabbatical policy, which has already supported a staff member starting a PhD by prior publication.

#### Equality and diversity

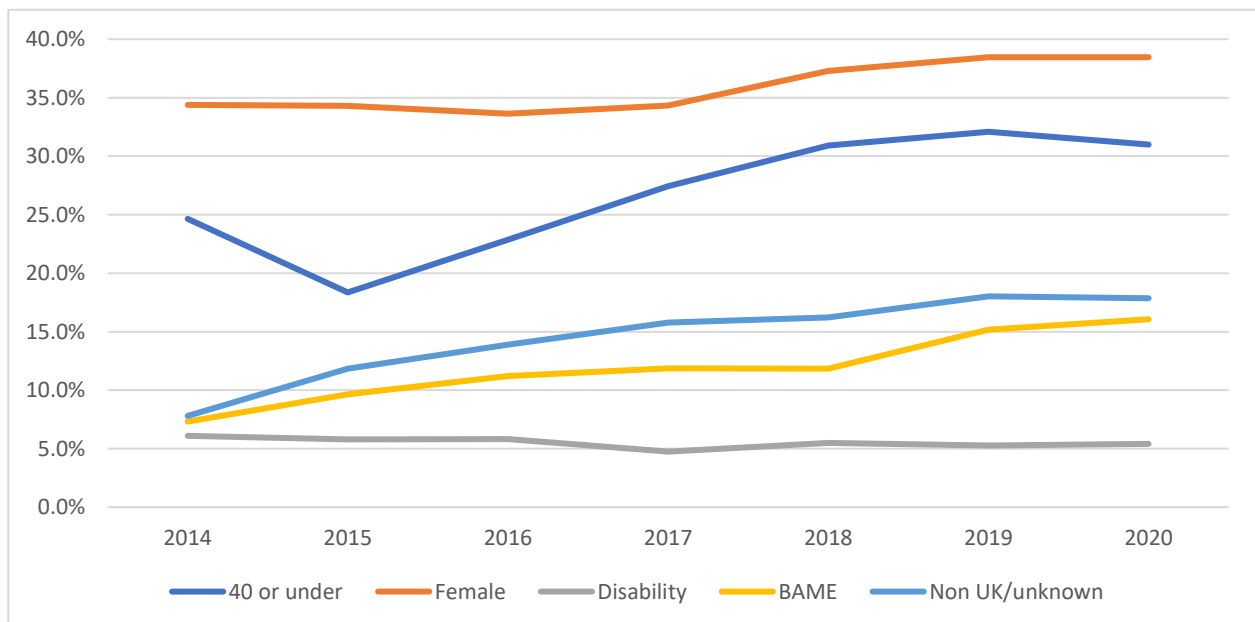
32. A focus on equality and diversity (as evidenced, for example, by our commitment to working towards achieving an Athena Swan award) has been at the heart of this consistent and ongoing commitment to researcher development and the development of our research community.
33. As a result, we have seen an increase in the number of staff Solent has submitted to REF, from 35.55 FTE in 2014 (representing 43 academics) to 53.82 FTE for 2021 (representing 57 academic staff).
34. The profile of our staff has also changed. Figure 1 compares our REF 2021 cohort with our wider academic staff. Comparatively more of our REF submitted staff are younger (57% are 40 or under compared with 31% of all academic staff), BAME (23% and 16%), and non-UK nationals (30% and 18%), while similar proportions are female (40% and 39%), and comparatively slightly fewer have a disability (3% and 5%).
35. Figure 2 shows the proportion of academic staff<sup>1</sup> in each of these groups for the years 2014 to 2020. With the exception of staff with a disability, which has remained broadly steady, the proportions of younger, female, BAME and non-UK staff have all increased over this period. This comparative profile reflects our commitments to both ECRs and to equality and diversity.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Research Pathway was not introduced until 2018, so comparisons over time have not been carried out for this sub-group of our academic staff.



**Figure 1: Proportion of REF 2021 returned and all academic staff by age, gender, disability, ethnicity and nationality, on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020**



**Figure 2: Proportion of academic staff by age, gender, disability, ethnicity and nationality on 31<sup>st</sup> July for 2014 to 2020**

- 36. The University offers a range of working arrangements, including full-time, part-time, term time only, compressed hours and job share, and recognises that flexible working arrangements, where these can be accommodated by the School or Service, can bring mutual benefits to both employees and the University.
- 37. Our policies and strategic approach to equality and diversity are developed at the highest level within the University. Their implementation is monitored and overseen by the Equality, Safeguarding and Wellbeing Committee (set up in 2018 as the Equality and Wellbeing Committee), which is chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and reports to the Vice Chancellor’s Group.
- 38. Additionally, the People and Development Annual Report, which contains data on staff protected characteristics, goes to the Board of Governors. This is integral to the targets, such as narrowing the gender pay gap, against which the University measures its progress.

39. In support of this focus on people, the Solent Values, introduced in 2015, set out six principles (Respect, Inclusivity, Integrity, Ownership, Engagement and Teamwork), which reinforce our commitment to equality and diversity across all our activities. These principles are actively considered as part of the annual personal development reviews carried out for all staff. They have been further supported by the introduction, in 2019, of our Equality and Diversity e-Learning course. All staff are required to complete the course on joining Solent and every two years thereafter, and over 80% have completed it to date.
40. This overarching commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in Solent's research. For example, one of the Impact Case studies submitted in REF 2021 is the result of research focused on [gender empowerment and multicultural crews in merchant shipping](#); and the Kick it Out campaign, to which Solent's researchers made a significant contribution, highlights measures to address racism and homophobia in football. Our researchers are continuing to develop further impact case studies for potential inclusion in future REF cycles which hold equality and diversity principles at their heart.

### **Research students**

41. Solent attained Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) in August 2017. Prior to this, Solent awarded doctoral degrees through Nottingham Trent University. The attainment of RDAP was a key strategic goal of the University's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.
42. The focus has been on our areas of research excellence and supervisory expertise, including practice-related research degrees, particularly sport and maritime engineering focused projects. Solent currently has 77 registered Doctoral students. Seventy percent are studying part-time, reflecting our support of staff wishing to develop their research careers. Since RDAP was attained, 20 postgraduate students have been awarded their degrees (16 PhD and 4 MPhil).
43. Our approach to PGR student recruitment is becoming increasingly strategic. From 2021, we will require applicants to indicate how their proposed research aligns to our research priority areas.
44. The Research Degree Committee (RDC) is Chaired by the PVC for Research & Knowledge Exchange and oversees the governance of Research Degree provision at Solent. Postgraduate student representatives are appointed annually to the Committee by doctoral student nominations, ensuring the input of the student body into the governance of research degree provision.
45. All doctoral students are reviewed annually by a School doctoral review panel chaired by the School Doctoral Coordinator, which assesses their progress and needs. This process is overseen by the Research Office, which encourages students to evaluate their learning and training needs and develop their research and communication skills in preparation both for furthering their academic qualifications and for employment.
46. The RDP makes specific provisions for doctoral student training, covering areas such as methodology, qualitative and quantitative research, literature review training and preparation for milestones, amongst other sessions. Students are encouraged and supported to participate in other on-line and in-person training, such as sessions run by the University of East Anglia, Angel Productions and the GuildHE summer school, for which the Research Office directly funds students expressing an interest in attending. The RDP newsletter advertising all upcoming training and news is issued on a fortnightly basis to all doctoral students and academic staff, and feedback is actively encouraged.



47. Additionally, doctoral student feedback is received and implemented through other mechanisms, such as during annual monitoring, the RDC and the PRES. Changes in response to this feedback include enhanced on-line signposting to resources and website improvements simplification of forms and the creation of a doctoral student handbook to incorporate all guidance within a single document.
48. Doctoral students have access to an annual allowance of £500 to facilitate conference attendance and specialist training and resources.

### Income, infrastructure and facilities

49. As indicated above, the Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 introduced a step change in the University's infrastructure to support research development. Key to this was the inception, in 2015, of the Research Office. The instigation of the new role of PVC R&KE in 2020 placing representation of the Research Office within the Vice Chancellor's Group for the first time and firmly establishing research at the heart of our strategic priorities, crystallises the progress made since 2015. As well as the PVC R&KE joining the VC's Group the Deans have also been added to the Group. This has significantly improved the level of Academic Leadership at the University and as a result the weighting given to research when decisions are being made at the Institutional level.
50. As of 2020, Solent has seven emergent research communities, involving 47 researchers, working in areas ranging from Culture, Media and Place to Wellbeing and Applied Research in Psychology.
51. In line with the Strategic Plan, growth has been supported by an ambitious Infrastructure Plan. This has targeted areas of strength, so building towards the REF 2021, and also emerging areas in which the University is seeking to build for REF 2027/8. One of the most significant of these investments, complementing Solent's [towing tank](#) and [ship handling centre](#), has been the suite of [maritime simulators](#) funded by the Gosling Foundation. As the UK's largest ship and port simulation centre, the suite offers not only exceptional training using the latest facilities, but also unique support and expanded capacity for maritime research, particularly around the maritime workplace.
52. We have also invested in state-of-the-art [sports facilities](#), which include a new sports building housing not only a gym, but also conference and testing areas, all fully equipped with the latest technological and analytical tools to enable research.
53. More generally, Solent's research environment has been supported by the provision of the Researcher Launchpad. This is a large space, fully equipped with both in-person and virtual meeting facilities, that is entirely dedicated for use by researchers. In addition to hosting research groups, seminars, and meetings with internal and external collaborators, the Launchpad is used for location-based researcher training and postgraduate research student events. It also serves as an informal space, where researchers meet, connect and share ideas.
54. In addition to ongoing refurbishment of Solent's audio-visual suites and various other studios, in 2018 the University invested in laboratory and training suites to support the emergence of subjects in Allied Health and Psychology which will be developed for the 2027 REF. This includes recruitment of staff and a doctoral student involved in microbiology research.
55. The University has invested £4,000 in impact consultancy since 2018.
56. Between 2015 and 2018, invited keynote and closing keynote speakers to our annual research and innovation conference included: Judith Mottram (Professor of Visual Arts &

Dean of the School of Material, Royal College of Arts & REF2014 sub-panel 34 member), Andrew Chitty (AHRC, Creative Economy Champion), George Mackay (Professor of Media Studies, UEA), David Sweeney (Director, Research and Knowledge Exchange, HEFCE) and Lauren Bowker (Textile Alchemist, the Unseen).

57. The University invested in the Pure Central Research Management Information System in 2016, as part of its commitment to growing its research profile, as well as to open access and open data. The system is used as a repository for research outputs and to manage and support research bid development, through to award project management.

### Summary

58. For REF 2021, the University is submitting in three core areas. Two (24 and 34) build on our 2014 submission, and investment in facilities and recruitment in both areas demonstrates Solent's ongoing commitment to their growth and development. The third (20), to which we are submitting for the first time, represents the culmination of the cross-institutional theme of workplace, inequalities and life-course, which was emergent in 2014. Support through the development of ECRs, and investments such as the maritime simulator suite, have led to a growing research community engaged in a wide range of activities.
59. Since REF 2014, Solent has made the step change to becoming a research-active University. We have gained RDAP, introduced a research career pathway, appointed a PVC R&KE, added the deans to the VC's group and employed 23 staff on dedicated research contracts. Our 2020-2025 strategy will ensure that this trajectory continues at increased pace, building a stronger and more supportive environment for our growing research community.