Institution: University for the Creative Arts

1. Context and mission

University for the Creative Arts is a subject-specialist university submitting to a single unit of assessment in REF 2021, UoA 32, Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory. The submission to this single unit captures the entire research effort of the University which is thus fully represented in the Unit-level Environment statement (REFb). This Institutional-level statement is brief. Within the structure specified by the template, it provides the following:

- Section 1, Context and Mission: a concise overview of the context and mission of the University as a whole, and how this frames the specific research context and mission.
- Section 2, Strategy: an overview of the University strategy and the research strategy, with an emphasis on future developments. Past and current delivery of the research strategy across the census period is dealt with fully in REF5b.
- Section 3, People: an introduction to the University's people strategy and the context this provides for staff development in research; details provided in REF5b section 2.
- Section 4, Income, Infrastructure and Facilities: a brief introduction to these areas with an emphasis on technical facilities for both students and staff; details of research income and research-specific infrastructure is provided in REF5b section 3.

1.1.1 *University Context and Mission*

(1.1.1) University for the Creative Arts (UCA) is specialist provider of education in the creative arts, creative technologies and business for the creative industries. The University's roots reach back to the nineteenth century, and its recent history is built on the 2005 merger of Kent Institute of Art and Design and Surrey Institute of Art and Design, leading to the award of University title in 2008. At the July 2020 REF census date the University had 173 FTE academic staff (250 headcount) and around 8,000 higher education students studying for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research degrees. There are also approximately 1,000 further education students. Students are located on four campuses in the adjacent counties of Kent and Surrey (Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham and Rochester) as well as at Maidstone Studios (film and television courses) and Hampton Court Palace (hand embroidery courses). In autumn 2021 the University opened a new campus in Xiamen, China.

(1.1.2) Within its specialism of art, design and business for the creative industries, the University offers a broad range of teaching and research organised into 6 discipline-based schools:
- Architecture (Arch)
- Business for the Creative Industries (BSCI)
- Crafts and Design (C&D)
- Fashion (Fash)
- Film, Media and Performing Arts (FMPA)
- Fine Art, Photography and Visual Communication (FAPVC)

(1.1.3) The University offers a rich educational experience to students in studio-based courses, delivered by staff who, within their discipline, specialise in research, pedagogical enquiry or industry engagement. They are supported by excellent digital and physical infrastructure, facilities and equipment across all subject areas. The quality of UCA's educational offer is evidenced by the achievement of TEF Gold in 2019.

1.2 *Research in the University Context and Mission*

(1.2.1) Research plays an important role in the University's creative and academic communities and the experience it offers to students. The University has research in all areas of UoA 32's broad remit:

- art history, design history and visual culture history
- practice in many areas of art and design, including fine art, photography, film, animation, crafts, performance, spatial and environmental design
- art, design and visual culture theory and curation.

(1.2.2) The University's researchers produce diverse research that advances knowledge and leads to impact, much of it highly visible to public audiences across a range of media and cultural sites. 27 per cent (FTE) or 29 per cent (headcount) of UCA's academic staff have significant responsibility for research and are submitted to REF 2021, increased from 13 per cent (headcount) in REF 2014.

(1.2.3) The University's 6 schools are its primary academic and research units, each with a clear disciplinary and research identity. The school structure has developed across the REF 2021 period, moving away from a bipartite faculty system and equalising research cultures across previously less-developed disciplines. The Business School for the Creative Industries was created in 2018, and in summer 2019 the decision was taken to disestablish the School of Communication Design, with staff and courses in the area of games and narrative design moved into the School of Film, Media and Performing Arts, consolidating a developing research culture and research degree provision in that school. Staff and courses in the area of Graphics moved to the School of Fine Art, Photography and Visual Communication, joining an established and vigorous research culture and the University's largest concentration of research degree students. Other schools have worked to develop and enhance their discipline and research cultures, with the appointment of new professors and readers (see REF5b) and the development of research degree infrastructures.

(1.2.4) Several of UCA's schools house research centres: the Crafts Study Centre (CSC) and the International Textiles Research Centre (ITRC) are the focus for research in the School of Crafts and Design and often work together on joint projects, for instance the 2017 conference *Craft Connecting Architecture*. The Centre for Sustainable Design is in the School of Business for the Creative Industries, and delivers a wide programme of research and events including the annual *Sustainable Innovation* conference. The Fine Art and Photography Research Centre is the focus for research in that school and encompasses research projects including *Fast Forward: Women in Photography*. The Animation Research Centre in the School of Film, Media and Performing Arts is focussed on extensive archive holdings and UCA's history as home of the first UK higher education course in animation, founded by Bob Godfrey (creator of *Roobarb and Custard*). The University's research centres are important in driving impact, with all 4 REF3 case studies submitted in REF 2021 based on a research centre, and 3 of the 4 building on previous REF 2014 impact case studies.

(1.2.5) Research is a key component in the University's identity as a leading provider of education in creative art and design and business for the creative industries. UCA's research and researchers are recognised for their contributions to new knowledge, producing excellent outputs with impact (see REF2 and REF3) and providing leadership and advancing understanding in their disciplines and beyond. Details of indicators that evidence that contribution are discussed in full in REF5b.

2. Strategy

2.1 *University Strategy*

(2.1.1) UCA's overarching strategic aim is to be recognised as a global authority in the area of creative arts, creative technologies and business for the creative industries. In 2017 the University undertook a process of staff consultation to develop a new Strategic Vision, surfacing existing areas of excellence and planning for new opportunities and developments. The resulting 2018-28 Strategic Plan sets out goals for success in existing and new areas. It is structured around 5 intersecting objectives:
- developing the 'business of creativity'

- developing the University's international presence and influence
- enhancing the University's educational offer
- delivering a shared vision through high-performing teams
- achieving a financially robust and resilient business model.

(2.1.2) These objectives drive the University's development. Initial foundations and milestones have been achieved in, for instance, innovative new provision in business for the creative industries, with the opening of the Business School in 2018. The move towards a greater outward-looking global reach has been realised through strategic partnerships led by the development of the new Institute of Creative Innovation (ICI) with Xiamen University, China. The ICI campus in Xiamen was opened in September 2020 and offers courses in digital media technology, visual communication, advertising and environmental design. The University's business model has been successful in ensuring resilience through the Coronavirus pandemic, and is generating resources to fund the development of new initiatives, including investment in new research areas and in research degrees.

2.2 *Research in the University Strategy*

(2.2.1) Research has a role to play in all 5 areas of the University Strategy: in developing the expertise and profile of staff; in attracting new partnerships and students; as part of the disciplinary development of the Business School for the Creative Industries; in forging international connections; and in continuing its long-established role in UCA's educational offer, in which research is seen as a key skill and activity for students at all levels as well as for academic staff. The University's Research Strategy was developed in 2018 in conjunction with the Strategic Plan and sits beneath it as a sub-strategy. Its key principles can be summarised briefly:
- to grow excellence and intensity in research and impact, with an increasingly international outlook
- to develop new discipline areas within the University's subject-specialist focus
- to develop PGR provision as part of the University's research community
- to contribute to the culture of enhancement in which staff excellence in research intersects with pedagogy and industry skills in the service of students, the University and wider society
- to increase external funding and income.

(2.2.2) This strategy is supported by relevant performance measures (Key Performance Indicators at University level and a more detailed set of school-based and Research Office measures). When measures were updated in 2020, a new policy on responsible research metrics was set out, based on key principles in *The Metric Tide* (2015) and on work by the Forum for Responsible Research Metrics.

(2.2.3) REF5b assesses UCA's past research strategy and many aspects of the current 2018-28 research strategy, as these are best addressed within the context of UoA 32. REF5b also deals with the University's approach to important issues such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity in research, research integrity and ethics, and open research, again within the context of the University's single-unit submission. Here in REF5a the emphasis is on future developments in research, including the expansion of UCA's research into new subject areas beyond UoA 32, and plans for research degree expansion and the achievement of research degree awarding powers.

2.3 *Future Developments*

(2.3.1) The opening of the Business School for the Creative Industries (BSCI) in 2018 saw UCA move into a new subject area (one that grows naturally from the entrepreneurial and business

interests of many staff, students and courses across the University). In its early stages the focus of the BSCI was on establishing its teaching infrastructure and new BA and MA courses. From autumn 2020 onwards the school has started to develop its research infrastructure and systems. New staff joining in 2020 include a number of established and early career researchers, and while these staff joined after the REF 2021 census date, for the subsequent REF exercise the University will develop a submission to Unit 17. The school research plan includes aims and objectives for the identification of new research areas/focus within that unit, the scoping of new research centres, planning for impact and environment, career development and research planning for staff, recruitment of new researchers and research leaders, and continued development of PGR provision.

(2.3.2) UCA's School of Architecture has to date submitted its research to UoA 32. For the subsequent REF exercise the University is scoping a separate submission to UoA 13, with investment in staff and infrastructure to continue development of research in architectural design, the architectural humanities and spatial technologies.

(2.3.3) These new subject areas will sit alongside development in those areas of the University's research activity that sit within UoA 32. The research strategy of the School of Fashion is built upon the productive overlap between fashion research, textiles research and external knowledge-exchange opportunities. In 2021 the school will be renamed School of Fashion and Textiles, and the International Textiles Research Centre will move into the School from the School of Crafts and Design. While maintaining its links to the crafts subject area, the ITRC will provide a focus for the existing highly successful pedagogy and practice in the School of Fashion to develop into an energetic research culture across fashion and textiles.

(2.3.4) The Strategic Plan of 2018-28 provides for a comprehensive review of the University's course portfolio, and this has been actively progressed since autumn 2019, in the form of a new Academic Plan. As part of this, work is being undertaken to identify key areas of distinction for the University, located at the intersection of pedagogic excellence and reputation, research expertise, knowledge exchange and external engagement. These areas will be supported with investment.

(2.3.5) UCA is also pursuing important developments in research degree provision. UCA's history of research degrees goes back to the early 2000s, and it is a leading provider of practice-based PhDs, with particular expertise in craft practice, photography, and fine art. To date the University has awarded degrees through external validating partners, previously the Universities of Kent and Brighton, and currently University of the Arts London. Planned application for research degree awarding powers (RDAP) was delayed by regulatory change in 2017-19 (HERA and the creation of OfS), however in 2020 the University submitted its RDAP application and (after a further delay caused by COVID-19) this is now undergoing scrutiny by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

(2.3.6) The achievement of RDAP will be a springboard for the University to grow substantially its PGR community, including in the new business and architecture subject areas discussed above. The creation of a Doctoral College to provide strengthened centralised support and monitoring structures for students and supervisors located in the schools is under way, and the University is now able to provide a number of competitively-awarded studentships (fees and maintenance) at PGR level, building on a longstanding fee-waiver programme. The goal is to achieve research council block-grant funding, with achievement of RDAP an important stepping-stone towards this. The PGR community is growing (both students and supervisors, see REF5b), and this is forecast to continue.

(2.3.7) All these future developments will necessitate increased research intensity at the University, with the proportion of staff with significant responsibility for research planned to increase above its current level of 27 per cent (FTE). The University's key performance indicators, formerly shaped to REF 2021 and the University's application for Research Degree

Awarding Powers, have in 2020 been reformulated to provide staged targets and measures for all areas of the Research Strategy.

(2.3.8) See the COVID-19 Annex for a commentary on the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on future planning for research at UCA.

3. People

(3.1) Staffing strategy and staff development specifically for research is dealt with fully in REF5b, where the University's approach to 'significant responsibility' processes and to EDI in research are also described. REF5b also presents data on the proportion of ECRs in our submission and the profile of submitted staff according to contract type, disability, gender and ethnicity. This section of REF5a provides a brief overview of the University's overarching 'People' strategy and policies, as context to the research-specific data in REF5a.

(3.2) The University for the Creative Arts recognizes, values and supports the achievements of staff. At the REF 2021 census date (and beyond it) two specific areas of focus are High Performing Teams and Inclusivity and Diversity.

(3.3) High Performing Teams: UCA recognises that there is an important set of skills, experience and competencies required to successfully lead and manage a team and that there is a need to invest time and support in effectively managing people. The University is rolling out an initiative to provide greater clarity to leaders and managers on the expectations of people management, coupled with the provision of a development programme focused on the key competencies.

(3.4) In 2020/21 the University reviewed our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and now takes Equality & Diversity and Diversity & Inclusion as two distinct areas for review and development. Equality & Diversity relates to analysis of staff diversity and recruitment in relation to the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010, our analysis of pay gaps, and our recommendations for changes in policy and practice to achieve diversity targets. Annual review of this data indicates that we continue to attract applications from diverse candidates. In the latest data around 20 per cent of applications were from BAME candidates and selection was proportionate across the equalities groups. The diversity of our staff increased in the last reporting year, however for some categories of 'hidden' difference we continue to have high levels of non-declaration.

(3.5) Diversity & Inclusion relates to the University's strategy toward achieving an inclusive culture including:
- Inclusive Community
- Inclusive Teaching Practice
- Inclusive Recruitment

A new Diversity & Inclusion strategy is in development for implementation in 2021/22, with a range of interventions which will include developing a positive culture around reporting and resolving conflict and enhancing the range and type of networks available for staff and students. The University will continue work already underway on developing Inclusive Teaching Practice, with a particular emphasis on the internationalisation aspects of this work, and will further embed inclusive recruitment. UCA has been in consultation with Advance HE to develop a Race Equality Charter for small and specialist institutions, and we look forward to the result of the consultation in hope of signing up to this Charter.

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

(4.1) Research income and the support infrastructures and activities for researchers (the university's primary research resource) are dealt with fully in REF5b. This section provides a brief overview of technical facilities and resources. These serve UCA's UG and PGT students and pedagogic mission as well as staff and PGR researchers.

(4.2) These facilities support research, creative practice and scholarship across the full spectrum of arts, design, media and craft and encompass traditional, analogue, emerging, digital, and interdisciplinary approaches. All four campuses provide extensive studio production spaces,

photography studios, IT labs with Macs and PCs running the latest industry-standard software, Print Bureaus for reprographics, laser cutters, 3D prototyping resources, printmaking studios, workshops, art shops, and equipment hire departments. In addition each campus has specialist facilities shaped to sub-disciplines of art and design. Examples are the Digital Fabrication Lab and sculpture studios at Canterbury; the facilities for traditional oil-based print, including intaglio, relief, and hot metal letterpress at Epsom; the film soundstages, industry-standard Avid post-production suites and computer games labs (with graduate incubator) at Farnham; and fashion textiles digital printing and silk screen printing resources at Rochester. Indicative detailed examples are the Ceramics department and Film and Media Centre at Farnham.

(4.3) Since 2019, approximately £300,000 of capital investment has modernised the ceramics area at Farnham, serving both traditional techniques and new technologies and ensuring that both the equipment and environment support multidisciplinary approaches to thinking and making through materiality. The refurbished kiln room houses four gas kilns and fifteen electric kilns. A wet back spray booth is situated in the glaze technology lab; adjacent is a suite of Shimpo throwing wheels with these facilities complimented by digital equipment, namely two Wasp 3D printers for clay. Pug mills are used to recycle clay and blungers to make in-house slips for slip casting. A plaster and mould-making facility supports the production of moulds, and a jigger jolly machine enables batch production.

(4.4) The 1,000 m² Film and Media Centre at Farnham was opened in 2019, costing approximately £6 million (build cost) with a further £1 million on technical equipment. The building accommodates student and staff enquiry in performing arts, film studies, and music composition & technology with a wide range of cutting-edge technological equipment. Facilities include a black-box film studio, performance spaces, and an acoustically sealed recording studio featuring a live room, dubbing theatre, and control room.