Institution: Bishop Grosseteste University

1. Institutional overview

Bishop Grosseteste University's submission to REF 2021 reflects a period of significant growth in its strategic commitment to research. Two more Units of Assessment (UoAs) have been added to the three that were returned in REF 2014, there has been a three-fold increase in the number of outputs (to the equivalent of 122), a four-fold increase in research income (to £244k in 2019/20), and a four-fold increase in the number of staff submitted (to 45.2 FTE).

Bishop Grosseteste University is a specialist higher education institution located in Lincoln. The institution was established in 1862 as a Diocesan teacher training college, it attained university college status in 2007 and university title in 2012. Its academic activities are well established in the city, across Greater Lincolnshire and further afield. It is a member of GuildHE, the Cathedrals Group of Universities, the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion, and Universities UK.

1.1 Size and portfolio

The student population has grown over the 2014-20 REF cycle, particularly the postgraduate communities.

Table 1: Student number change (FTE) 2013 and 2019 intakes

	FdA		UG		PGT		PGCE		PGR		Total	
	FTE	%	FTE	%	FTE	%	FTE	%	FTE	%	FTE	%
2013	451	16.9	1568	58.6	110	4.1	543	20.3	3	0.1	2675	100.0
2019	326	12.3	1619	61.0	287	10.8	397	15.0	24.5	0.9	2654	100.0

The University has a research-informed teaching focus with a strong tradition in education. Since 2014, the portfolio has extended its subject mix, particularly in the social sciences and fields allied to education, adding business, counselling, health and social care, psychology, SENDI, sociology and TESOL.

1.2 Structure and organisation

In 2019, BGU replaced a structure of three academic schools with a single academic faculty and five constituent programme portfolio areas reflecting the University's academic foci:
- Applied Social Sciences
- Arts and Humanities
- Education and Lifelong Learning
- Primary and Early Years Initial Teacher Education (ITE)
- Secondary, Further Education (FE) and Teacher Development.

Table 2: Staff composition 2019-20

Programme areas	Permanent academic Staff	
	Head	%
Applied Social Sciences	25	22.1
Arts and Humanities	27	23.9
Education and Lifelong Learning	17	15.0
Primary and Early Years ITE	22	19.5
Secondary, FE and Teacher Development	9	8.0
Other	13	11.5
Total	113	100

In addition, as instrumental enablers within BGU's 2014-2019 strategic plan, the University introduced a central Research and Knowledge Exchange Centre (RKEC) and a parallel, teaching-focused Centre for Enhancement in Teaching and Learning (CELT). The RKEC is responsible for:
- Research and knowledge exchange policies
- External grants
- Doctoral programmes
- Staff and student researcher development and support
- Ethics and integrity.

1.3 Purpose and ambition

The University's identifies its purpose in the current strategy (2019-2025):
- By valuing all of our people and through ethical and enduring partnership working, we will deliver individualised and creative support and transformation to our learning and business communities.

The ambition is:
- Shaped by our heritage and led dynamically into our future, by 2025 BGU will be a mature, confident, sustainable and accessible university.

1.4 Local and regional context

Strongly committed to the city of Lincoln, Greater Lincolnshire, and the East Midlands region, BGU is set within a context of local and regional needs, as expressed through the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan and the City of Lincoln Council Strategic Plan.

The University is also a signatory to a Civic University Agreement (2020) with City of Lincoln Council and University of Lincoln, identifying a framework with five 'pillars of engagement': education, skills and aspiration; growth, economy and local industrial strategy; health and wellbeing; housing and social cohesion; and climate emergency.

1.5 Sector representative body membership

As a member of GuildHE, BGU benefits from closer engagement with external policy formation and implementation. GuildHE supports the development of practical services that facilitate the enhancement of research activities including consortium access to online repository frameworks and postgraduate research (PGR) student seminars and conferences.

The University is also a member of the Cathedrals Group of Universities which supports strategic collaboration through the Research and Enterprise Sub-Group. Collaborative activities include cross-institutional theme-led sandpit events.

2. Research strategy

2.1 Strategic planning

2.1.1 The 2014-19 planning period

The University's strategic aim following REF 2014 was to:
- Transform BGU into a 'research informed' University with a demonstrable increase in research outputs of improved quality.

Strategic research objectives throughout 2014-19 included:
- Establishing a Research Centre and offering a full programme of research education resulting in a measurable change in research identity, culture and environment
- Creating cross-disciplinary research units with a focus and growth of expertise established in key areas aligned to the academic portfolio, business and enterprise development and external research networks
- Supporting staff and students to engage with research in all areas of institutional activity and embedding research leadership within management roles
- Increasing BGU's contribution to local, regional, national and international research partnerships
- Growing the proportion of research income generation
- Working towards achievement of Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) and enhancing the submission to REF 2021 with a critical and sustainable mass of active researchers, research outputs and outcomes.

Doctoral degree programmes supervised at BGU were developed as part of a validation partnership with the University of Leicester (UoL) during the 2008-14 REF cycle. The first BGU-supervised students achieving conferral by the UoL were in 2014 (PhD) and 2018 (EdD).

2.1.2 The 2019-25 planning period

In its 2019-25 strategic plan BGU restates its ambition to 'deliver growth and development through a commitment to excellence, creativity and innovation' in research, and is aiming to bring 'a differentiated and comprehensive BGU experience to all stakeholders' through its research work. Two key research-related priorities remain:
- Achieving RDAP
- Growing the reputation for the delivery of high-quality research with impact.

Specifically, these encompass objectives to:
- Increase the volume and quality of published outputs
- Extend the public impact of research, incorporating local/national/global contexts
- Enhance the research environment through Research and Knowledge Exchange Units (RKEUs) that reflect collective institutional expertise
- Grow the postgraduate research community.

2.1.3 Covid-19

Research activity at BGU responded expediently to the impact of the pandemic. Through its partnership with UoL, support was provided to doctoral students including facilities, extensions of candidature, and intercalations. Research projects undertaken by both staff and doctoral students adjusted methods of investigation to online modes where appropriate.

2.2 Research and knowledge exchange

The 2019-25 strategy highlights the interface between research and BGU's expanding knowledge exchange (KE) ambition and activity:
- Providing an externally facing and supportive response to the complex knowledge needs and challenges across the East Midlands and more widely
- Developing dynamic and diverse relationships and partnerships engaging a range of economic, social and cultural sectors, and involving the breadth of the subject mix.

Characterised by its breadth and the centrality of its education-orientated specialism, BGU is a KEF 'M-cluster' university. Its KE overlaps with its research, especially in areas of established strength and emerging activity (e.g., working with the public and third sector, local growth and regeneration, public and community engagement) and through a range of KE fields:
- Business and economic growth
- Education, schools and skills
- Culture and heritage
- Health, wellbeing and social care
- Digital solutions and open data
- Environment and resilient development.

2.3 Research and learning and teaching

In 2017 BGU received the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Gold Award and continues to place strong emphasis on learning and teaching, and the student experience. Staff research activity that engages students is recognised as an important contribution to enriching the learning and teaching environment, as conceptualised in the TEF, and internally through programme annual monitoring. As an active supporter and facilitator of student-research-engagement projects, CELT provides funding which includes targeting co-production research and KE projects of staff.

2.4 RAE and REF submissions, 2008-21

Table 3: Submissions to research exercises, 2008-21

	Number of Units of Assessment	Number of staff submitted (FTE)	UoAs
RAE 2008	2	8.0	45, 57
REF 2014	3	11.0	25, 29, 30
REF 2021	5	45.2	4, 23, 27, 28, 31

Following the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 2008 to which BGU returned to the UoAs for Education and for English Language and Literature, the submission to REF 2014 included History for the first time. For REF 2021 BGU making a first submission to Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience and to Theology and Religious Studies.

Table 4: Staff FTE By UoA, REF 2021

	3	23	27	28	31
	Psychology, Psychiatry & Neuroscience	Education	English Language & Literature	History	Theology & Religious Studies
REF 2014		6.0	2.0	3.0	
REF 2021	9.0	20.5	5.0	6.0	4.7

The overall quality profile shifted significantly between RAE 2008 and REF 2014, with the outcome of latter recognising a significant proportion of 'internationally excellent' (3*) and 'world leading' (4*) research activity, and a large reduction in unclassified outputs.

For the submission to REF 2021, the intention for BGU has been to consolidate and increase the proportion of 3* and 4* research – a primary aim of University's strategy for 2019-25 as increasing maturity as a research provider will underpin an application for RDAP.

2.5 Leadership and management

Leadership and management in research have evolved and have been strengthened and refocused, aligning with the strategic priorities around enhancing REF submission, attaining RDAP, and acknowledging the expansion of KE and its interrelationship and integration with research activities.

During the 2014-19 strategy period, the roles of Executive Dean for Research, Knowledge Exchange and External Engagement, and Head of Research were created, together with new and separate Programme Leader role for the PhD and for the EdD. Leadership and management of research also incorporate the role of Chair of the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee.

2.6 Research centres, units and clusters

The 2014-19 strategy set out the creation of organised units of activity as one of the main research objectives, given their contribution to building a 'research-informed university'. Commencing as 'clusters' from 2015, these aimed to align with 'the existing portfolio, business and enterprise initiatives, external networks, as well as foster cross-disciplinary activity'.

In the current strategy period, the clusters were replaced by RKEUs with a greater focus on achieving critical mass and coherence of identity. The RKEUs also emphasise forward planning and objective setting for outputs, impact and income generation. The creation of a total of 10 RKEUs also recognises and supports the growing place of knowledge exchange and its inter-relationship with research activity.

Table 5: Research clusters and units, location of leads, 2015-16 and 2019-20

	Education	Humanities	Psychology
2015-16	3	1	1
2019-20	6	3	1

2.7 Ethics and integrity

University research activity takes as a key reference point the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and its internal processes have developed in parallel with this external policy imperative to steer good practice. Central ethics and integrity policy, monitoring and scrutiny is the responsibility of the Research Ethics Committee with advice, guidance and project approval administered centrally.

2.8 Open research

Open research is supported through BGU's online repository, BG Research Online. In addition, the University established the Lincolnshire Open Research and Innovation Centre (LORIC) with an emphasis on digitisation, data management enhancement, and open publication of research and KE project data (see section 4.2.1).

3. People

3.1 Staffing strategy

3.1.1 Recruitment

The institutional priority placed on the development of its research is reflected in the expectation that all permanent academic staff are appointed to teaching and research contracts.

Table 6: Academic staff contract types 2019-20 (FTE)

	Teaching and research	Research only	Teaching only
Permanent	90	0	3.5
Temporary	1	5.7	0.6
Total	91	5.7	4.1

3.1.2 Senior researcher promotion

Promotions processes to Reader and Professor status were reviewed during the 2014-21 cycle. Two progression pathways were replaced by a four-pathway approach, reflecting the close relationship of knowledge exchange alongside research, and other spheres of activity across the institution.

Senior researchers represent a relatively small proportion of the academic staffing body; however, the number has increased since 2016, and especially as part of a recruitment round at the end of 2020 and through the successful recruitment of advanced researchers from other institutions.

Table 7: Senior roles (headcount), including new appointments

	Readers		Professors		Total		
	New	Total	New	Total	F	M	All
2014-15	-	1	2	4	2	3	5
2015-16	-	1	1	5	2	4	6
2016-17	1	2	-	5	2	5	7
2017-18	4	6	1	5	5	6	11
2018-19	-	6	1	4	4	6	10
2019-20	1	6	2	5	3	8	11
2020-21	3	7	2	7	5	9	14

The gender balance within the staffing body has been examined closely as part of Equality Impact Assessment in the preparation for REF 2021 (see **Section 3.4**). Gender Pay Gap and Equal Pay are monitored as part of its commitment to diversity and equality, with its latest report (2019) acknowledging steps being taken to narrow the gap.

Table 8: Gender pay profile, all staff, percentage by quartile (2019)

Pay quartile	Female	Male
Lower	75	25
Lower middle	66	34
Upper middle	66	34
Upper	59	41

3.1.4 Workload, performance and audit

A workload allocation model (WAM) was introduced in 2010 and revised in 2015 to assist with researcher development during the 2014-21 REF cycle. The updated model made more explicit reference to public impact interactions, set out a more detailed and systematic framework of key performance indicators, and gave a clearer overview of the typical activities associated with different levels from early career researchers (ECRs) to professors. The model is a very supportive scheme, providing time allocation aligned with the needs and role expectations of staff, including those registered for doctoral degree study, ECRs and those at a more advanced stage of their research careers.

Annual performance review (APR) was enhanced in conjunction with the introduction of the 2015 WAM. This includes an Individual Research Plan (IRP), in which staff list achievements, identify development needs, and propose targets. Reporting and research target-setting make reference to key performance indicator categories and activity types outlined in the WAM.

An Annual Research Audit (ARA) was introduced in 2016 as a centralised and more systematic approach to activity reporting, monitoring and planning. This has brought more consistency in the logging of activities and supports internal and external research planning and policy implementation, especially for REF.

3.1.5 Mentoring

A mentoring arrangement incorporated within APR was replaced with a more flexible but informal approach 2017. Staff are supported in identifying an appropriate research

mentor, although this is not mandatory. The establishment of clusters and RKEUs have provided opportunities to create contexts for supportive and collaborative arrangements.

3.1.6 External and internal project funding support

The RKEC oversees grant approvals processes, including overseeing and directing a co-writing and mentoring support scheme.

The Research Staff Development Fund is a source of internal financial support for activities with measurable outcomes – e.g., published outputs, public impact, income generation, and capacity/capability building. Funded activities are expected to contribute to the REF submission, application for RDAP and/or BGU's engagement with the KEF. The remit of the fund has widened over the REF cycle, typically supporting the presentation of papers at external conferences (with related published output), external research visits in support of a published output/submitted bid, student-researcher engagement and co-production of output, and organisation of public/external RKE events.

The Learning and Teaching Investment Fund and Student Engagement Innovation Fund were established by CELT to develop and enhance learning and teaching, to support research projects directed by staff that involve students, and to include co-production outcomes.

3.1.7 Sabbaticals

The University's sabbatical processes were reviewed in the 2014-21 cycle. Application for sabbaticals is a competitive process, typically supporting the replacement of teaching and administrative duties with additional research time. Sabbatical support has generally supported ECRs and mid-career researchers or assisted completion of doctoral theses by full-time members of staff.

Table 9: Sabbaticals awarded

	REF output	Doctoral	Total
2014-15	1	2	3
2015-16	0	1	1
2016-17	1	2	3
2017-18	2	4	6

3.1.8 Staff doctoral study

A significant proportion of staff have been and continue to be registered for doctoral programmes:

Table 10: Permanent staff registered on doctoral programmes

	Number registered	% of all staff
2018-19	20	17
2019-20	19	14

Members of the academic staff establishment who are registered internally for doctoral degrees are assisted with payment of fees. In addition, a standard time allocation for their research is incorporated within the WAM.

3.1.9 Staff training and events

Institutional research conferences are generally held annually and organised by the RKEC to give opportunities for staff and PGR students to present their work. Policy-related training seminars are also hosted by the RKEC – e.g., REF, bid-writing, doctoral supervision and ethics. The work of coordinating internal and external research events has grown as part of the activities of the developing clusters and RKEUs.

3.2 REF Code of Practice – eligibility and submission

Consistent with the spirit of the REF, BGU has taken an inclusive approach to the identification of staff for submission. Guidance relating to the WAM, the IRP, and ARA were updated in relation to the expectations of REF 2021, and more specifically through the internal consultation schedule for producing the institution's REF Code of Practice (CoP). A key internal reference point for the CoP and its determining of 'significant responsibility for research' (SRR) is the WAM, with staff allocated the equivalent of at least 0.2 FTE self-directed research time considered as part of identification processes. Completion of an IRP (or equivalent) and the ARA are essential elements of meeting the criteria for holding SRR.

The profile of BGU's staffing base is relevant to the approach for determining SRR. A significant number of staff are recruited from professional practice backgrounds, especially in education. Staff without doctorates or registered for doctoral study are a prominent feature of this group, and typically do not meet the independence of research expectations of SRR.

For REF 2021 BGU has aimed to include all staff with SRR without recourse to Unit exemptions. Thus, staff involved in programme delivery purposes outside the subject fields associated with the five submissions have been returned if they hold SRR, utilising the breadth of UoA descriptors.

Table 11: Identification of staff (FTE)

All academic staff	Total	**104.5**
	Permanent	79.2
	Temporary	25.3
Not eligible	**Total**	**8.2**
	Teaching & scholarship	4.1
	Management & administration	4
	Fraction	0.1
Eligible	**Total**	**102**
	Teaching and research	96.3
	Research only	5.7
Submitted	**Total**	**45.2**
	Independent researcher	3.7
	SRR	41.5

3.3 Doctoral programmes and research students

The attainment of RDAP is a key priority of the current 2019-25 strategic plan, building on preparatory work through the preceding strategy period.

Doctoral student numbers have been growing, supported especially by a major institutional investment in 10 University studentships from 2015-16. Expansion has been more widely distributed across the main areas of REF UoA foci. Approved supervisor capacity had been building to support this development, increasing from 10 in 2014-15 to 26 for the start of 2020-21.

Table 12: Doctoral students (FTE)

	Education	Psychology	History/Theology	Total
2013-14	7			7
2019-20	19.5	3	2	24.5

Conferrals

Conferrals	To 2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Per year Total	6	4	7
Per year Academic staff	2	1	2
Per year Non-academic staff	4	3	5
Accumulative Total+	6	10	17

3.4 Equality and diversity

The University took an open and inclusive approach to the REF 2021 and aimed to return all members of staff meeting eligibility criteria and holding SRR – i.e. 34% of its established academic staff base.

E&D data are reported in full in the EIA final report, profiled by UoA, protected characteristics, and part-time and term-only employment. Summary and headline data are made available in full for audit as required. Data are not given in detail in BGU's Unit-level Environment Templates, with full protected characteristics profiling, given the relatively small numbers of staff comprising each UoA. Profiling of SRR staff is broadly in line with the characteristics of the general academic staff body.

Table 13: Age profile of academic staff and those with SRR

		18 – 27	28 – 37	38 – 47	48 – 57	58 – 67	68 – 77	77+	Total
2020	All Academic Staff	1	24	33	50	24	2	0	134
		1%	18%	25%	37%	18%	1%	0%	100%
	SRR Staff Members	0	10	12	18	5	1	0	46
		0%	22%	26%	39%	11%	2%	0%	100%

Table 14: Ethnic background of academic staff and those with SRR

		White	Other ethnic background	Not known	Total
2020	All Academic Staff	124	7	3	134
		93%	5%	2%	100%
	SRR Staff Members	41	5	0	46
		89%	11%	0%	100%

Table 15: Gender profile of academic staff and those with SRR

		Male	Female	Total
2020	All Academic Staff	49	85	134
		37%	63%	100%
	SRR Staff Members	19	27	46
		41%	59%	100%

Tables 13-15 give the full academic staffing compliment (including casual contracts) (BGU REF 2021 EIA Report, provisional, January 2021).

4.1 Income

The University's QR income is received by the RKEC and has been deployed to Support the two main financial support commitments and initiatives, RKE Staff Development Fund and University studentships.

Research income has been growing year-on-year over the 2014-21 period:

Table 16: Annual grant income (not including QR)

	Income
2013-14	53,000
2019-20	170,200

Table 17: Income sources 2013/14–2019/20 (not including QR)

	£	%
BEIS Research Councils, RS, BA etc.	261,217	36.5
Other	453,925	63.5
Total	715,142	100.0

BGU received its first UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund allocation in 2019-20 (£52,230), which contributed to public policy research in the region.

4.2 Resources and facilities

4.2.1 LORIC

Opened in 2018, LORIC is a major investment in BGU's RKE infrastructure, capacity and capability. It houses:
- LORIC staff team
- RKEC staff team
- Dedicated space for BGU's doctoral student community
- Project offices and teams
- Digital scanning suite
- Meeting rooms

With £2.0 million investment from the European Regional Development Fund, LORIC provides data-driven innovation across Greater Lincolnshire with research-related activity typically including public policy scoping, open data analysis and publication. Partners have included Lincolnshire County Council, the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and DEFRA. Examples of research projects have included reports on company performance, market presence, social return on investment of local Community Interest Companies and charities, open data on labour and education profiles of local sectors, and public funding policy implementation. An application for LORIC 2.0 funding from the ERDF was submitted in March 2020 and was confirmed to support a continuation of the work across the county until 2023.

Funding from the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund supported research into the economic, employment, and energy needs of the local coastal community, and the data needs of local energy and health and social care sectors. Resulting reports have led to larger projects with partners that will continue into the next REF cycle.

4.2.2 Library

Research-related resources developed by the library have expanded over the REF cycle. In 2015/16 the Library coordinated the development of the University's first research repository (BG Research Online) with responsibility for research support and repository administration allocated to a specific role within the library team. A set of library webpages was developed for research students in 2019.

Five new journal databases have been acquired, as well as JISC-negotiated journal agreements from four major publishers (Cambridge University Press, SAGE, Wiley, Taylor & Francis), thus facilitating access to hundreds of full-text journals not previously accessible. The Library has also signed up to the transformative (aka Read & Publish) deals replacing these earlier agreements. Two significant donations of research materials were added to the Library and catalogued: Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology (2014), and Lincoln Mystery Plays Trust (2017).

4.2.3 Laboratories

Three new research and teaching laboratory units were developed during the 2014-21 cycle. The Archaeology Lab was relocated, expanded and re-equipped to support the launch of UG degree provision, and to further develop research and public engagement. The Psychology Lab was established in 2016, to accompany the growth and development of this subject field at BGU and to support possible interdisciplinary developments with Health and Social Care. The third laboratory is a dedicated Sport and Exercise Performance Lab that supports student research projects for the Sport, Coaching and Physical Education taught provision.

4.2.4 GuildHE

The University has developed certain resources as part of its GuildHE consortium membership. This includes an institutional repository, which holds outputs that are 'in scope' of the REF 2021 open access policy requirements, and the UEA/GuildHE Online Training Series for PGR students.