

Institution: University of Bolton
Unit of Assessment: C23 Education
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>Overview</p> <p>Since its last submission in 2014, the school of education has implemented significant transitional strategies as the department looks to support the institutional shift towards adopting a Teaching Intensive Research Informed (TIRI) focus. Despite this, research carried out during the last REF period has continued to make a significant impact both on a local and international level. The research into the design and use of a range of interoperability specifications for educational technology contributed to the creation of specifications and standards that are now used within the UK and around the world. In Spite of a change in the units focus members continue to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to research in their pursuit of meaningful change where pathways to impact are carefully considered to maximise the potential benefit. This methodical approach is evident upon reflection of the research into school improvement which saw the University of Bolton engaging with key stakeholders and beneficiaries within the local area to implement prescribed theories of action which then led to the improvement of educational outcomes for students across the borough. The unit encourages strategic planning when looking to maximise any potential impact that can arise from research. Our approach to research adopts the belief that carefully considering how findings might be communicated, taken up and applied by stakeholders in different countries and contexts from the outset will undoubtedly strengthen the design of the research process and maximise the prospects of impact. Hence In 2017, when the university hosted TEDx with the theme of 'Innovate, Integrate, Educate' four members from the school of education gave keynote speeches which were later uploaded to YouTube in January 2018 and combined has since been viewed over 16,000 times. Over the next five years, the department will continue to build capacity within the areas of social mobility, school improvement and educational technology.</p> <p>The TIRI agenda is a strategic commitment, established in 2015, to integrating teaching, learning and research within programme development, design and delivery for the benefit of our student body as such the research focus of the unit has been significantly altered since the last submission as they ceased to be valid. In line with these changes, the research aims identified in 2014 were halted and shifted with work undertaken in the last period coming to a natural conclusion in this cycle as the Unit shifts its strategic aims to meet the Institutions broader aims of teaching intensive and research-informed.</p> <p>Research in Education is split across faculties and research centres within the institution that predominantly focuses on research through practice and policy. The Education department sits within the Faculty of Professional Studies which is also home to the Centre of Pedagogy and the newly established International Centre for Educational Enhancement. Community studies and Early years sit within the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, the Research Institute for Social Mobility and Education (RISE) was established in 2019 and is an independent research centre. Programmes have been commissioned by professional bodies which have been designed by internationally renowned staff to develop a curriculum for leaders from within the classrooms of the FE sector. Research on storytelling within the post-compulsory PGCE programmes to inform practice has been utilised to inform assessment design in other programmes alongside work on the use of video for coaching and developing trainee teachers in master's provision. This highlights the practice-based research and the scholarship of teaching and learning that informs teaching within the classroom and embodies the TIRI agenda.</p> <p>Our research as a unit draws on the scholarship of teaching and learning and the practice/policy lens. As mentioned earlier, the strategic aims of the unit have shifted since the introduction of the TIRI strategy with departmental restructures and retirements impacting on the focus of the unit. In 2018 a strategy was developed that aligned the unit to the Teaching Excellence Framework, which included the three aims of Teaching Quality, The learning Environment, and Student outcomes and learning. This was also supportive of the TIRI strategy and allowed the department to find its</p>

direction during a time of change. During the assessment period, the team developed several projects for curriculum and practice. These included

- School improvement and college improvement programmes across the UK and in Australia.
- Curriculum design for Refugee Healthcare Professionals which was published in Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning.
- Embedding technology in learning.
- A nationally commissioned programme for the Education and Training Foundation.

The research lines within learning technology and standards have continued, organisational change has had an impact on the trajectory of research, and a change in emphasis. In the previous REF the Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards (CETIS) was a key part. Following a University restructure Cetus was spun out as Cetus LLP, and an entity which is independent of the University and other research activities were absorbed into the school. Cetus LLP remains a sustainable and successful entity after five years of operations, and is a testament to the vitality and relevance of the Education research environment in the UoB. As may be seen in the outputs section of this submission, this work has been maintained through members of staff who remained in the department following the closure, and two key members who remained at UoB, Professor Griffiths (of the Department of Education) and Professor Hollins (who works across the School of the Arts, Business, and Education), this continuing work is reflected in case study one of this submission.

In Education, our impact has been within the classroom of not only the university but also across educational providers across the region. We work collaboratively with Professional bodies to support research and dissemination events and have supported several conferences for ESOL and teacher education. Our aim for the next period is to enhance our research impact further and beyond our two case studies. Our first case study reflects ongoing work in the department in learning technologies, underpinned by our established interoperability research. It reflects a shift in emphasis from the previous REF submission to improvement of the online experience for learners, tutors and institutions. This represents a fundamental repositioning from the theoretical to applied research that has occurred in the school of Education and the positive impact of this work on four distinct stakeholder groups.

The second case study documents the extent to which research into school improvement during the REF period adopted a methodical approach to drive meaningful change for students across the borough. This was facilitated through the establishment of key relationships with local school leaders in Bolton. The decision to work in collaboration with key stakeholders throughout the design and implementation of the research provided the underpinning knowledge for what would come to be referred to as “instructional rounds” within the literature. The process of generating strict protocols within an educational setting consisted of encouraging both teachers and school leaders to generate hypotheses that see learning as a consequence of precise teaching and was referred to as “theories of action”. The “theories of action” reflected what was observed in the thirty-six classrooms involved and was based upon a non-judgemental exploration of the associated links and contingencies between teacher actions and student response. The research shifted the notion of change as merely a top-down procedure as its inclusion of key stakeholders throughout the research made use of the four key drivers of system reform to develop pedagogic practices whilst enhancing the educational experience.

Going forward our five-year plan in education is developing specific research and focus around social mobility and the enhancement of education which will support RISE and ICEE in establishing research agendas and provide a platform for the research undertaken to be more outward-facing to establish greater impact and will include research on teaching and learning in a range of contexts including the use of technology, and professional development of staff and trainee teachers. Several initiatives have been established, including partnership with Kunskapsskolan UK, a branch of the highly successful Kunskapsskolan group of schools based in Sweden.

Within the context of the University's TIRI strategy to engage with the community in knowledge transfer, the unit has established a number of links with professional bodies and associations to host several knowledge transfer events. The Education Department has organised the university's annual TIRI conference since 2018 providing a space for dissemination across the institution. Alongside this, we organise local events for the Society of Education and Training which have been hailed as some of the most attended in the country. Keynote presentations and workshops have been delivered nationally and internationally, and members of the education unit have produced TEDx talks. The unit is progressing towards more open and impactful research that goes beyond the university classroom and supports the open access research agenda.

The unit supports integrity in research ensuring that research is conducted in accordance with appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks including BERA guidelines and the Code of Practice.

2. People

The research team for the Education Department is currently composed of eleven members of staff; this is supplemented across the unit by a further five members of staff who are situated in other departments. Collectively the research team oversees the development of the research culture in the Education department and associated centres within the Unit. Each member of staff has a research personal development plan as part of the performance review process, which is reviewed annually either by the Dean of Faculty or by the appropriate academic operations manager. In line with institutional frameworks, staff are provided with opportunities and structure support to develop as researchers. The research coordinator provided mentoring and support for those new to research, and within his role, he also monitors research student support through annual monitoring in conjunction with the Research and graduate school and was the deputy chair for the Board of Studies for Research Degrees.

The Education department's staffing and recruitment policy are geared towards supporting and sustaining a vibrant team of practitioners engaged in research, building on existing strengths within post-compulsory teacher education and inclusion. The staffing and development strategy has been highly successful in establishing a base of staff with doctorate qualifications. In 2013, only one member of staff in the education department held a PhD, in 2020 we can see that number has increased to 11 core members of the education department with all other staff currently undertaking doctoral study. This policy of staffing and recruitment is mirrored across departments within the Unit, with the University focussing on developing staff.

The Education department developed a 30-credit doctoral supervision module that sits within a MA in teaching and learning in higher education framework. This module was developed in conjunction with the Research and Graduate school and is undertaken by all staff across the University seeking to supervise research students. The module pairs new supervisors with established supervisors to ensure participation within the University framework for research degrees, including supervision activities and milestone review activity.

Individuals at the beginning of their research careers are well supported through central training measures and through mentoring within the department, excellent evidence can be seen with one of our BA undergraduates who was engaged as an undergraduate researcher through a HEFCE innovations in teaching and learning catalyst fund, and was awarded a university scholarship by the Vice-Chancellor to undertake a PhD. The student was able to present his work at several national conferences and has co-authored an article and book chapters with staff.

Research leave, including impact and sabbatical leave, is negotiated with the Dean of Faculty of Professional Studies.

Staff have received a range of funding for the development of curriculums and innovation projects outside of standard research funding. Typically research funding is gained through the University Jenkinson Award Scheme, which is aligned with the TIRI strategy of the University and that it has high-level outputs. Several staff have won funding in the past from this route. One member has also been awarded internal research funding in recognition of being awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2019, which was the first NTF awarded to a member of Staff at the University. Another internal stream of funding is the STRIVE fund which promotes collaboration with partners in the group; members of the team have also successfully received funding to support developments and research in transitions.

The education team has an employability agenda underpinned by the TIRI strategy and works extensively with professional bodies to support post-qualification employment. This also includes working in alignment with professional standards, in terms of the post-compulsory sector, there is a huge drive to ensure that teachers are research engaged and informed. Members of the team established the first student teacher journal for the FE and Skills sector which has garnered support from the Society for Education and Training and a range of institutions across the sector. The 1st edition is due to be published in January 2021.

Staff members who carry out research and who achieve impact are recognised through the Jenkinson Research Awards with Dr Telfer winning 'Outstanding Research Team' 2020.

Research Students

Research students are supervised through a team of two to three staff comprising a Director of studies and other staff with appropriate expertise. Research students are able to attend other classes within the department that would benefit their studies, and this is supported by locally organised specialist seminars. Students are encouraged to present at institutional and national conferences, and many are organisers for student-led conferences. Students are encouraged to develop networks through a supportive environment. There are currently 18 PhD students registered in the department with a further 63 registered on professional doctorate routes.

Research Completions 2014- 20

Year	No. Of PhDs
2013/14	2
2014/15	3
2015/16	2
2016/17	3
2017/18	2
2018/19	2
2019/20	5
Total	19

Equality and Diversity

All members of staff are required to undertake mandatory online training in Equality and Diversity Awareness; The Bribery Act; PREVENT duty; GDPR. In addition, research coordinators and those in management roles must complete the module "Challenging Unconscious Bias". The University is committed to the advancement of equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

We have had a number of students with disabilities undertake doctoral studies including Multiple Sclerosis, blindness, severe hearing impairments. With respect to research students with disabilities reasonable adjustments are made at each stage of their doctoral studies including discussing alternative submission methods.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Staff have been successful in securing funding from professional bodies and HEFCE for professional development of staff within the education sector. At present the team are submitting a number of bids with achievement for all to investigate technology for children in alternative educational provision.

Internal funding has been secured on a number of occasions including the Jenkinson Awards and the STRIVE awards.

An award was won for HEFCE Catalyst fund for innovations in teaching and learning, which engaged undergraduate learners in research projects on technology enhanced learning. This led to two of the undergraduate undertaking PhDs.

The International Centre for Educational Enhancement enjoys collaborative links with Kunskapsskolan in investigating school improvement methodologies, as part of the new centre plans are in place to seek funding from 2021.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Members of the team collaborate in a number of ways to contribute to the research base, economy and society. Work with Refugee Healthcare Professionals contributed significantly to the NHS workforce development and integration of refugees into society, and ongoing work is being undertaken in the form of collaborative practice-based research with schools for educational enhancement and school improvement.

Significant work has been undertaken with professional bodies, in particular, the Society for Education and Training, to support the development of trainee teachers in contributing to society and the economy with the formation of successful network groups and events in the region.

Since joining the University of Bolton in 2016, Professor Hopkins has continued to work with key stakeholders to deepen the knowledge and understanding of school improvement strategies. Later that year he was invited to be a keynote speaker at The Cyprus Primary Head Teachers National Conference to disseminate his findings on the importance of leadership for school success since a meaningful effort has been given to participate in a variety of collaborative research projects which look to engage locally with key stakeholders to improve the pedagogic practices of schools within the borough. The first of which included “the Bolton Learning Partnership” which is a local network of schools who together hope to improve the educational outcomes for students across Bolton. The process saw the implementation of prescribed school improvement strategies that had been drawn from prior research to develop “theories of action” which emerged out of instructional rounds. As a result of including the end-users within the design and implementation of the school improvement strategies, the research looked to make use of the four key drivers of system reform which resulted in the development of pedagogic practices that has significantly enhanced the educational experience for over 19,000 students in Bolton. Following on from this Research into how school leaders can positively impact whole school learning saw significant engagement from schools across the borough as leaders participated in a leadership development programme which consisted of six workshops that were designed to empower local leaders to facilitate powerful learning within their schools. The focus on the project was to utilise a local network of school leaders to engage in theory-driven workshops which could then lead to improved outcomes for students across Bolton.

The research findings were then disseminated on the world stage as Prof. Hopkins was invited to be a keynote speaker at Bastow Leadership Institute Melbourne (2016) and the Australian Council for Educational Leadership (2017) to present his findings of school improvement and system

leadership. The findings were then also presented at the British Educational Studies Association Annual International Conference in 2018, which was hosted at the University of Bolton.

As international interest in the research grew, so too did Professor Hopkins' media presence as he looked to impact society beyond the traditional realm of academia. As such in 2016 Professor Hopkins recorded a series of short videos to raise his profile which summarised his key research findings with the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership in Australia. Following on from this, in January 2018, Professor Hopkins gave a keynote speech at TEDx, an eminent online platform for sharing research with people around the world. The keynote speech was published on the official TED Talks account and combined with the videos above have been viewed by approximately 10,000 people on YouTube alone.

Members of the unit are active in supporting research through regular reviewing of articles and roles on editorial boards including: journal of impact cultures and the InSPIRE FE journal, Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RAPAL) journal.

Staff across the team are regularly engaged in peer-reviewing work and editorial roles including for Emerald Publications, Bloomsbury Publications, International Journal of Students as Partners, International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Teaching and Learning Inquiry, Journal of Educational, Innovation partnership and change, Journal of Learning and Experience, InSPIRE FE journal, and the British Education Studies Association. Educational Futures, Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RAPAL) journal, and the Teacher Educator.

Dr Cross is currently a visiting professor at the university of law and Prof Hopkins received an honorary doctorate from Nottingham Trent in 2014.

A number of staff have won prizes both internally and externally including: Staff in the Unit have won the following Internal and external prizes, "Outstanding Research Team" in the internal Jenkinson Research Awards in 2020, Society for Education and Training research award in 2017. In 2019. Dr Cross of the Education Department received a prestigious National Teaching Fellowship (NTFS), which is the first such award received by a member of staff at the University.

Staff members have presented their work at conferences both nationally and internationally, including for the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, EuroSoTL, European First Year Experience Conference. Games and Learning Association 2018 (GALA), The Association of Learning Technologies (ALT) annual conference 2016 and 2017, IEEE Learning Technologies Conference 2016.

In 2017, the university hosted TEDx with the theme of 'Innovate, Integrate, Educate' and four members of the education team presented at the event, videos were uploaded to YouTube in January 2018 and between the four presenters they have over 16,000 views.