

**Institution: 10007140 Birmingham City University**

**Unit of Assessment 23: Education**

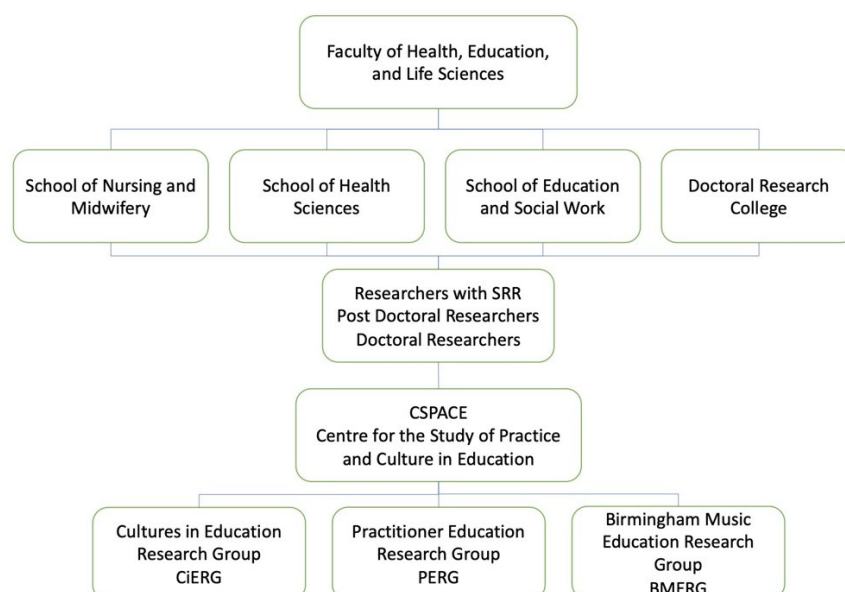
### 1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

#### Overview

Birmingham City University (BCU) has a longstanding tradition of producing high quality, close to practice, research in Education that is anchored in teacher education and closely aligned to teaching priorities. The unit sits within the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences (HELS), which has invested over £41 million in campus development since its formation in 2014 towards a mission to be an outstanding provider of practitioner education **for** Birmingham and the region. Building a research engaged community of practitioners (staff and students) is at the heart of this mission and research in Education has played a central role in transforming the culture and values of the Faculty and its work with the communities it serves. The Faculty provides strategic oversight for research through the Associate Dean for Research (ADR), **Kendall**, and has **invested in a 'grow our own' research strategy**. Over £3 million of investment in Education research since 2014 has resulted in **96% increase** in researcher capacity, **76.6% increase** in income and **300% growth** in the size of the Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) community. We have also designed and embedded a research career development pathway and support infrastructure to enable **all** Cat A staff in Education to qualify to doctoral level and progress to research independence. In Feb 2021, 32 of 101 Cat A staff in Education held doctorates (32%) compared to 10 in 2014. A further 26 are currently enrolled on a doctoral programme, meaning **the majority (57%) now hold or are studying towards a doctorate**. This represents a **significant step change in research culture**.

The operationalisation of our research strategy is led by a team of Research Centre Directors who report to the ADR but work closely with Heads of Schools/Departments.

The growth and transformation of education research is led by the Centre for the Study of Practice and Culture in Education (CSPACE). CSPACE draws its membership primarily from the School of Education and Social Work (SoESW) but also from faculty and university colleagues interested in HE teacher education and a vibrant Doctoral Research College (DRC). This brings a strong interdisciplinary, inter-sectoral culture to the unit. CSPACE is directed by **O'Leary**, supported by **Dakka** as Deputy Director and a team of two Senior/Research Fellows (SRF/RFs) and four Research Assistants (RA). The Centre leadership role is rotated annually between SoESW's community of Professors and Readers as part of a strategic commitment to build a collaborative, collegial culture, to provide leadership development and progression opportunities for researchers, and secure synergies between CSPACE and SoESW. Since 2014, **Blackburn, Fautley, French, Kendall** and **Smith** have served as Director. The Deputy Director role was created in 2018 to provide an additional middle leadership development opportunity.



A distinguishing feature and commitment of CSPACE's work is a focus on participatory practitioner research. This is not limited to initial teacher education and/or schools but works across phases from early years to higher education. **Practitioner research is the 'golden thread' that connects our research groups, specialisms and projects**, impacting education policy and practice internally and externally across sectors. Two illustrative successes are the HEFCE funded *Improving Learning and Teaching through Collaborative Observation* (**O'Leary**) which resulted in the adoption of a new institutional peer observation model and *Exchanging Notes* (**Fautley**) which resulted in the development of national models for young people at risk of low attainment to engage with music education.

CSPACE is committed to work that serves social justice aims **by enabling the communities we work with to become research-engaged, knowledge-producing, self-transforming and sustainable**. Our development of the EdD programme (see Section 2) has been a key dimension of this strategy, providing an accessible, scaffolded path into research production that feeds directly back into practice. We prioritise collaborative approaches to research that blur traditional boundaries between researchers and 'researched', 'research *with*' not *'on'* communities', and this is reflected in co-production of research questions and the methodological approaches we adopt.

CSPACE has three constituent Research Groups (RGs), each led by an internationally recognised senior researcher supported by post-doctoral researchers and doctoral students.

**Birmingham Music Education Research Group (B-MERG)** is led by **Fautley** and is concerned with creative and music education. It works with a diverse range of children and young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and other groups at risk of exclusion from arts education. B-MERG works closely with, and draws members from, the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

The **Practitioner Education Research Group (PERG)** is led by **O'Leary** and focuses on working with education practitioners across phases and sectors to co-produce research that interrogates and challenges inequalities in practice settings, and the policies that frame them, towards development of more socially just models of practice and the re-imagining of professionalism.

**Cultures in Education Research Group (CiERG)**, co-led by **O'Connor** and **Blackburn**, aims to empower children, young people and families by increasing understanding and provision of education services in the wider cultural contexts of their lives. Its work has included children and young people who are: in care; bullied at school; engaged in practices around sexting via social and digital media; have experienced holiday hunger, developmental risk or are otherwise marginalised through concepts or social constructions of ableism and/or disability.

There is a **dynamic relationship between CSPACE and its RGs**. Each RG both manages its own programme of meetings and internal/externally facing events and feeds into a common schedule of seminars, research cafes, an annual conference and the 'Christmas Lecture'. The CSPACE blog and website also provide a cohesive common touchpoint. Core CSPACE members, RG leads and Research Coordinators from each of the SoESW's departments come together monthly for the CSPACE operational meeting. This meeting oversees operational delivery of CSPACE's strategic plan and reports into Faculty Research Committee (FRC).

### **Achievement of strategic objectives 2014 to 2021**

**1. To ensure RGs continue to be responsive to needs of internal and external users**  
Research groups were refreshed post 2014 to ensure a secure fit with internal and partner priorities illustrated by growth in commissioned contract research, grant capture and partnerships outlined below.

## 2. Financial sustainability and strategic collaborative partnerships

External income has increased by 76.6% since REF2014, with total income awarded over the REF period £1,349,000. In February 2021, the fully economically costed value of CSPACE's project portfolio is £842,394.73. Our growing reputation and profile has enabled us to diversify our funding portfolio and secure repeat investment. B-MERG provides a good example of breadth, working with 22 diverse research funding partners across industry and academia internationally from the USA to New Zealand, whilst PERG demonstrates depth with larger repeat contracts from the University and College Union (UCU) and the British Council in Vietnam. CSPACE has been particularly successful in securing grants from charities that share our commitment to social change such as OHMI, The Gatsby Foundation, Shannon Trust and, organisations focused on the sectoral transformations with which our research is associated such as the Education and Training Foundation, the Further Education Trust for Leadership and UCU.

CSPACE has substantially extended its international reach since 2014 and has developed 18 new international partners including work with Ministries of Education in Austria, Chile, Singapore, and Vietnam. CSPACE continues to be successful in funding international work through Erasmus+ and the British Council grants and has more recently achieved UKRI success with two AHRC Global Challenge Research Fund (see section 4) grants awarded in 2020 alongside smaller events supported by ESRC, AHRC and British Academy. This varied portfolio provides a sound basis for ongoing development and will minimize the impact of policy changes e.g. reduction in EU funding post-Brexit.

Increased income and strategic use of QR funding have enabled CSPACE to undertake pro bono or subsidised work that resonates with research priorities and our social justice commitment e.g. the Accord Housing Association project to alleviate holiday hunger, *Holiday Kitchen (O'Connor)* and to support RAs to bid competitively for 'first time' grants e.g. *Whittaker's 'Voices Foundation'* project exploring signing strategies across a multi-academy trust.

## 3. Continuing to develop the research infrastructure and policy environment and continuing to develop an interdisciplinary research base

CSPACE has benefited from substantial University-level **investment in research governance since 2014 (see REF 5a). This has secured a significantly transformed, comprehensive policy and infrastructure framework** that is well supported by a centralised team of dedicated research excellence (REX) and research gateway (RIG) officers who oversee all aspects of the research governance and project support life-cycle. HELS FRC, chaired by **Kendall (ADR)**, brings together REX/RIG officers, the University's insurance, EDI and Finance officers, Research Centre leads, academic leads for ethics, research integrity and Athena Swan to ensure that research governance at UoA level is systematic, compliant and informed by best practice. In turn, each Research Centre supports a network of Research Coordinators, reaching into every department within faculty to ensure the principles and practices of good governance are cascaded and embedded, along with providing a point of contact for training, support and dialogue. HELS has developed an inter-disciplinary research governance Moodle site and online-training materials and resources to support staff and students to achieve best practice.

HELS Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC) has oversight of all Education and Health related research for the University, and all levels of student and staff research follow a common approval process supported by the University's online portal and team of ethics officers. HELS appoints a Chair and Deputy Chairs (x3) for a three-year term with 0.25FTE and 0.2FTE respectively invested in each of these roles to reflect the significance and value of the work and the expected contribution to providing staff development and training. The FAEC Chair's group is recruited to represent the constituent disciplines of the Faculty. The current Chair and one deputy are from SoESW. Chairs are supported by a network of Departmental Ethics Champions who provide a conduit between FAEC and the needs and challenges of departments. This supports strong dialogue, a collective, developmental approach to ethical practice and ensures that FAEC is responsive to the needs of a highly diverse, interdisciplinary research community.

Securing an open research environment has been central to CSPACE's commitment to ensuring that research is co-produced with, and impactful for, collaborating partners, particularly practice based and international partners who do not have easy access to a research library. CSPACE is committed to a green open access policy for all research outputs and related activity. BCU's Open Access (OA) Repository acts as the main location for staff to deposit research outputs, though this is complemented by dedicated project web-spaces that share the tools and processes of our work with a wider practitioner community on an OA basis. CSPACE works closely with BCU's OA Officer and library team who provide ongoing training and support alongside a dedicated UoA moderator and OA champion (**Wade**). CSPACE has also developed an OA journal that is used strategically to disseminate practitioner-led research to a wider audience.

Current and past projects across all three research groups are testament to our involvement in and commitment to interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary research collaborations, as illustrated in Section 4. Interdisciplinary research has also become a feature of doctoral supervision (EdD and PhD), with many students co-supervised by teams comprising CSPACE staff and colleagues from other disciplines e.g. business, computing, health and media. Such interdisciplinary collaboration is showcased at our annual CSPACE conference which regularly attracts 150 staff and students from across the University.

#### 4. Maximizing the impact of our work

Maximizing impact has been a key priority since REF2014, with impacts designed to further CSPACE's social justice commitments.

Initial stimulus for our impact strategy for REF2021 was provided by an impact workshop delivered by impact expert Professor Mark Reed. In 2015, a faculty-wide impact strategy was developed with the key objectives:

- Expand the capacity of our research to influence policy and practice internationally
- Integrate impact into all of our research and make clear links to external engagement and pathways to impact
- Support our researchers to extend the reach and increase the significance of their research impact

**In 2016, £162,000 was invested in our impact strategy with the recruitment of 4 permanent RAs in education.** RAs worked with RGs alongside newly appointed University Impact Officers to design pathways to impact, lead on the development and coordination of impact work and track benefits and beneficiaries of our work. A programme of workshops supported ongoing development of this work between 2017 and 2019, with external experts providing additional guidance and support. For example, in March 2019, Dr Sanja Djerasic, an impact case study researcher from the University of Exeter, led a workshop for all CSPACE researchers, research coordinators, Faculty REF impact case study leads and Faculty research media officers. Impact is a key development priority on the CSPACE operational plan and is a standing item at monthly meetings.

The benefits of this investment are evident in the policy and practice impacts of our work which are well illustrated through our two impact case studies from B-MERG and PERG. For example, the *Exchanging Notes* project has had significant national impact in raising awareness about the benefits of enabling young people at risk of low attainment to engage with music education. Working with 46 music leaders, 23 music teachers, and 974 children, the research has played a prominent role in leading and informing the public perception of the possibilities of music education, as well as removing barriers to music education for those young learners in the schools involved and beyond. Similarly, the *Listen, imagine, compose* (LIC) project has had a lasting impact on the teaching and researching of composition in and outside of schools, resulting in CPD away days for secondary teachers attended by 300 practitioners and teachers, who have subsequently implemented curriculum change in their respective schools that has



impacted positively on 9,000 young people. LIC has now been extended into primary schools with a new tranche of funding totaling £104,511.

### 5. Continuing to fund, nurture and expand our PGR and post-doctoral research community

The expansion and development of the PGR and post-doctoral community is a key achievement of the Unit in this REF cycle with **headline growth in PGR enrolments of 300%** achieved through significant investment in an innovative, fully funded GRTA programme alongside diversification of entry routes. These achievements are detailed in Section 2 below.

#### Research and Impact Strategy 2020-2025

Our overall aim for the next 5 years is to continue strengthening our position as a centre of excellence for **close to practice education research**, ensuring our work continues to shape educational policy and practice locally, nationally and internationally. Our specific objectives, agreed at our annual planning event are:

- *People* – further improve our researchers' development through all career stages (i.e. from supporting staff through doctoral study to developing early and mid-career researchers into the next generation of research leaders); to invest in diversifying representation of BAME researchers to reflect the make-up of the communities we serve. We aim to increase our staff return by at least 100% by supporting the group of staff who have recently completed doctorates to progress to research independence.
- *Doctoral research* – further expand our community of qualified doctoral supervisors to enable us to continue to improve the quality and consistency of doctoral supervision by ensuring all supervisors complete our SEDA accredited *Communities of Practice around Research Supervision* qualification as a minimum requirement; grow our doctoral research community (and completions) by a further 50%, increasing the ratio of externally funded PGRs.
- *Quality* – ensure that our excellent research practice feeds directly into teaching at all levels, building our research pipeline by offering students opportunities to engage in knowledge discovery and applied research; improve the skills of staff in articulating their work in outputs in terms of research originality, rigour and significance.
- *Impact* – continue to develop our impact strategy to ensure that impact is integrated into all research projects from the outset; build upon existing research networks and enhance staff skills to establish effective pathways to impact; expand the capacity of our research to influence policy and practice internally and externally.
- *Sustainability* – continue to diversify our research income and grow our knowledge exchange and consultancy work by implementing a stakeholder engagement strategy that is underpinned by a commitment to maximizing collaboration with our extensive range of local and (inter)national partnerships.

## 2. People

### Overview

Creating **an inclusive, diverse research environment and a sustainable researcher community underpins our staffing approach**. CSPACE has benefited from a Faculty level staff development strategy which includes financial support, mentoring and workload management through an institutionally embedded workload allocation model (WAM). Since REF2014, over £1.5 million has been invested in new posts to support our **'grow our own' strategy** in Education. Evidence of the success of this strategy can be seen in our track record of staff recruitment, promotion and staff doctoral completions since REF2014.

7.5 FTE Category A staff (10 academics) were returned to REF 2014, a 100% increase from RAE 2008. In 2020 the FTE size of the unit has almost doubled again, 14.7 FTE and 16 academics. The profile of staff has changed significantly, with the majority now being full-time and substantively based in the discipline, in 2014 two FTE were from the School of Psychology and 3 were professors on 0.2 contracts supporting capacity building. The unit now has 4 full-time

Professors (**Fautley, Kendall, O'Leary and Smith**), 4 Readers (**Blackburn, French, O'Connor and Vigurs**), 3 Senior Research Fellows (**Dakka, Kinsella and Wade**), 1 Research Fellow (**Cui**) and 5 Research Assistants (**Anderson, Birmingham, Devaney, Everitt and Puttick**). 67% of senior researchers are female.

### Recruitment, promotion, equality and diversity

#### *Recruitment*

Since REF2014, over **£1.5 million** has been **invested in the appointment of research specific posts in Education**. This has included creating 7 new posts (three readers, 4 RAs) and consolidating 1 fixed term RA post to ensure equity, stability and sustainability. The new readers, established researchers, have provided much needed leadership and support for the capacity and capability building described below, whilst the RA posts have provided support for the income pipeline, project portfolio and impact strategy evidenced in this statement.

The faculty has also pioneered a new Graduate Research Teaching Assistant (GRTA) scheme, launched in 2013, to recruit and nurture a new generation of academic staff. GRTAs are appointed on a 4-year contract comprising a paid 0.25FTE Assistant Lecturer role in a relevant school and 0.75FTE PhD study attracting a fee waiver and stipend (at UKRI recommended value). GRTAs are fully supported to complete a PG Cert in Teaching and Learning and to gain Advance HE Associate Fellow Status. Since 2014 HELS has invested **£1,658,424** in the scheme and 18 Education GRTAs have been recruited. A third have, on completion, progressed onto academic posts in the Faculty (**Anderson, Birmingham, Devaney, Ludgate, Matchett and Puttick**). GRTAs are usually qualified practitioners recruited to undertake research in priority areas identified collaboratively by CSPACE and SoESW. The GRTA scheme has significantly expanded our commitment to offering progression to post-doctoral employment, which began with the appointment of **Blackburn and Kinsella** in September 2014.

#### *Promotion*

**Annual appraisal and Personal Research Review** (see below) **are used** proactively to **support and structure career development for researchers**. BCU has an annual promotions and conferment round for which researchers are mentored by the ADR and Professorial team. Since 2014, five staff have been conferred as readers (**Blackburn, French and O'Connor**) and professors (**O'Leary and Smith**), 60% of whom are women. **Cui, Dakka and Whittaker** were all promoted from research assistants to research fellows in 2018. **Dakka** has since been promoted again to senior research fellow, as have **Kinsella and Wade**. This continuous stream of promotions is further proof of our commitment to growing and supporting the career progression of researchers.

#### *Support and development for researchers at all stages of careers*

The BCU research career framework recognises **two distinctive groups** of academic staff who are developing their research careers: 1) **emerging researchers**, those at the early stages of establishing a research career who may be undertaking doctoral work or building a post-doctoral profile but who do not have significant responsibility for research; 2) **established, independent researchers** who have significant responsibilities in relation to research. Researchers in the latter group can apply for three research bands (Bands 1-3) annually. HELS provides a comprehensive and tailored support for staff in each phase of the career framework.

**Staff in Group 1** are supported to undertake a doctorate through a generous package of fee payment and 0.1FTE workload remission. This is additional to 22 days of scholarship time allocated to all staff. On completion of their doctorate, the 0.1FTE allocation continues for an additional year to secure time for post-doctoral publishing and networking. In any year, the faculty supports doctoral fee payment for between 80-100 staff. This opportunity is extended to professional services staff wishing to upskill and transition to academic careers. As a result of this support, 14 academics in SoESW completed a part-time doctorate (12 PhD and 2 EdD) between 2018 and 2020 and an additional 26 continue to work towards completion. This

engagement with doctoral study and recruiting academics with doctoral qualifications means that in February 2021, 58 of the 101 Cat A academics in Education (57%) held or were studying towards a doctorate. Six of these completed in 2020-2021, providing **compelling evidence of the ongoing momentum and pace of our 'grow our own' strategy**.

In addition to 0.1 FTE workload remission, staff in the post-doctoral phase are supported by a structured network, convened by **Devaney** and **Kendall**, that meets monthly to provide targeted support on grant capture, writing for publication and profile building to enable progression to Band 1 status (**Ludgate**). These initiatives are complemented by a peer-to-peer mentoring scheme supported by senior researchers. To date, 21 researchers are mentors/mentees. 30% are PGRs in the middle of their study; 25% are PGRs towards the end of their study; 25% are post-doctoral researchers; 10% are Band 1; and 10% are Band 3.

**Staff in Group 2** have significant responsibility for research and allocated research allowances of 25%, 35% and 50% of workload according to research band (Bands 1-3). Bandings are reviewed annually as part of the Personal Research Review (PRR) exercise, enabling academics to build flexible career trajectories. PRR follows BCU's code of practice and involves self-reflection, target-setting and a self-assessment of banding against published criteria. Completed PRRs are peer-reviewed by a member of the professorial team who makes a recommendation to support or amend self-assessment of bandings. Recommendations are moderated by a cross faculty, interdisciplinary panel. The PRR process feeds into annual appraisal discussions. This has been important for securing recognition and support for researchers who have practice-facing line managers with less experience of research. The embedding of the PRR process over the REF period has been supported by annual training workshops from the ADR for Heads of Department and their line manager teams. **Group 2 researchers play an active role in the co-ordination and support of RGs and mentoring of Group 1 and post-doc researchers.**

An annual pilot **project and sabbatical funding** call provides opportunities for staff to apply for longer periods of research leave or funding to undertake pilot projects as a springboard to larger, externally funded projects (seed funding). An annual budget of £25,000 is allocated to pilot projects (with up to £5,000 awarded for each project) and £10,000 for sabbaticals. Projects must align with CSPACE strategic priorities and the application process is a competitive one. All staff are invited to apply for both initiatives. Since 2014, over 35 pilot projects and 13 sabbaticals have been awarded across the Faculty, with a high percentage (80%) of female awardees. This has supported awardees to achieve a range of research outcomes, including writing up doctoral theses (**Wheatcroft, Matchett, and Lambert**). It has been a requirement for project proposing teams to include less experienced researchers and external partners to build confidence, experience and research networks.

CSPACE recognises that academic writing is a social practice that requires dedicated, protected time. All staff are entitled to attend writing retreats. Since REF2014, three writing retreats have been offered every year (October/January/July), with an average of 30-35 staff and PGRs attending each retreat. The retreats are held off-campus at the Woodbrooke Quaker Centre facilitated by a writing mentor and the ADR. In addition to the retreats, a collaborative partnership was formed with Canterbury Christ Church University in 2015-16, which included 2 residential away days that focused specifically on supporting senior academics to develop the quality of their writing.

CSPACE has an annual budget of **£20,000** to support researchers at all career stages to share their work at local, national and international conferences, Professors and Readers have access to an additional fund of **£10,000** to support development. The value of this support for writing is exemplified by the volume of outputs produced by our Group 2 researchers; the 37 outputs returned to REF2021 were selected from a **pool of 191**, an average of **12 per capita**.

**Developing researchers as doctoral supervisors** has been a key tenet of the faculty's '**grow our own**' strategy. Staff development and training in doctoral research supervision are provided through a combination of externally accredited and unaccredited doctoral supervision

programmes and support sessions. In 2015, CSPACE led development of a University-wide bespoke SEDA-accredited programme, *Communities of Practice around Research Supervision* qualification for doctoral supervisors (led by Hill). It is the first, and currently only, accredited supervisor training programme in the UK and has a specific focus on the pedagogical dimensions of supervision. By January 2021, 90% of CSPACE supervisors had completed the programme, with 73% having gone on to gain full accreditation. In 2020, the programme was successfully revalidated by SEDA for a further 5 years. All staff involved in supervising dissertations at Masters level are also required to undertake SEDA accredited training, which helps to embed a serious, systematic culture around research supervision. In addition, the DRC offers a supervisor development programme for all doctoral supervisors, organised and delivered by an internationally renowned expert, Professor Jerry Wellington. Furthermore, the DRC academic team provide an ongoing series of workshops and training on key doctoral topics: research degree regulations, supervisor briefings, the doctoral examination (viva), viva chair training and supporting the wellbeing and mental health of PGRs. In January 2021, **CSPACE's excellence in doctoral supervision was recognised internationally** with the award of a £65,000 grant from the British Council to develop an international 'Digital Doctoral Training Hub' as part of the UK-China-BRI (China/Vietnam/Indonesia) Education partnership Initiative.

### Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs)

Expanding the size and shape of the PGR community has been fundamental to developing and enriching the research culture in Education. The introduction of the **EdD programme** in 2012 has been **fundamental to supporting a 300% increase in doctoral enrolments** in Education. CSPACE supports a community of 123 PGRs, 11 full-time and 112 part-time of which 87 are following the EdD programme (compared to 18 in 13/14). Of these enrolments, 74 are BCU staff (62 EdD and 12 PhD), illustrating the centrality of the unit to building research capacity for the SoESW, HELS and the wider university. 30 EdD and 19 PhD students in Education are externally funded, primarily by employers, demonstrating the value that the wider education community places in our awards

Doctoral awards **increased by more than 250% between 2014 and 2020**, 25 awards (20 PhD, 5 EdD) compared to 7 for REF2014. The last two years have also seen the first graduates from a new EdD award. This throughput of completions has continued since July 2020 with an additional seven awards (3 EdD and 4 PhD) since the end of July 2020. Students complete within the timeframe allowed by their award and the team is particularly proud that part-time EdD students complete on average in 6 years and 3 months, 9 months less than the 7 years allowed by the award. These figures are clear testament to the ongoing commitments described above to increasing and enhancing the quality of our doctoral supervision along with support for PGRs described below.

### Recruitment of PGRs

Recruitment to PGR programmes in Education is overseen and quality assured by **Armstrong** as part of a three strong DRC academic team of PGR Directors representing the faculty's constituent academic disciplines and supported by two full-time officers who are part of a large central University team. The DRC has developed a **rigorous and comprehensive framework for the recruitment of doctoral students**. This starts with doctoral open days, the offer of informal meetings with prospective candidates prior to application, face to face/online interviews and detailed feedback on all applications. More recently, the GRTA scheme has been mobilised proactively to diversify the research community in response to recommendations of the 'Broken Pipeline' report; this work includes the introduction of pre-application workshops and greater emphasis on 'equivalent' experience and qualifications. The majority of PGRs are funded through the GRTA scheme or employers but CSPACE also attracts self-funded students, full, part-time and home and international PGRs wanting to study with particular researchers and research groups. For example, B-MERG has a 'go to' reputation for research in assessment in music education.



**PGR Training**

The DRC team work with CSPACE to oversee an annual programme of training opportunities that complements the formal structures of the PGR life-cycle and is responsive to needs identified through annual monitoring and the annual PRES survey, and ensures a secure grounding in research governance and integrity.

All PGRs complete a milestone tracker in their first month of enrolment that maps a pathway to completion within the timeframe allowed by their award. The Post-graduate Certificate in Research Practice ensures that they are equipped with a sound understanding of epistemological and ontological concepts, together with methodological research skills and ethical and GDPR responsibilities.

**Skills development** and the **monitoring of progress are closely supported** and strategically managed through the DRC and Faculty Research Degrees and Environment Committee (FRDEC). The Faculty has adopted the principles of the Vitae research development framework to support the maturation of its research community and this is embedded within Annual Progress Reviews (APR). APRs offer a three-stage process for PGRs, involving student self-reflection and assessment, supervisor comments and independent review by a third party who acts as 'critical friend' offering support and guidance to the student and supervisory team. A progression recommendation made to FRDEC helps to provide an overview of student progress but also highlights any students identified as 'at risk' so that additional support protocols can be put in place if necessary. APRs identify individual skills planning and training needs. PGRs are set realistic but ambitious targets for dissemination and impact of their work. Like staff, they are encouraged to attend writing retreats to ensure dedicated time for this activity. PGRs disseminate their work through internal and external research events seminars and the annual CSPACE conference. PGRs can apply to a £10,000 development fund to support dissemination externally. By the third year of full-time study or sixth of part-time study, PGRs are expected and funded to present their work to both national and international audiences. This expectation is discussed and tracked through evidence included in the APR.

A complementary programme of support is coordinated through the Faculty's 'Doc Skills Hub'. This includes weekly/fortnightly methodology seminars and formal scholarship and the less formal, subsidised breakfast and lunch club, thesis mentoring sessions and pop-up skills sessions. PGRs are also invited to attend the annual cycle of writing retreats (see above). Each year the new intake of GRTAs work with the CSPACE Director to curate and organise the CSPACE conference.

PGRs are provided with multiple opportunities to gain experience of collaborating with senior staff on projects and publications in their Research Group. For example, **Puttick** worked with **Kendall** on the *Open School Doors* project. Examples of co-authorship include **French** and **Lowe**, **Kendall** and **Puttick**, **O'Leary** and **Savage**, **Fautley**, **Kinsella**, **Whittaker** and **Nenadic**, **Devaney** and **Fautley**, and **Whittaker**, **Fautley**, **Kinsella** and **Anderson**.

This combination of high-quality supervision, complemented by a rich programme of seminars and mentoring by senior staff enables PGRs to excel beyond the expectations of their award. For example, **Dewes** received the BELMAS research bursary award for 2020. In 2016, **Devaney** was the inaugural recipient of the prestigious Anna Craft Award for Research into Creativity in Education, by the British Education Research Association (BERA) while still studying for her PhD and in 2015, shortly after completing her doctorate, **Blackburn** was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship.

**Equality and diversity**

CSPACE recognises the crucial role of EDI in developing and sustaining a vibrant and stimulating research environment and contributes actively to the University's commitment to providing an inclusive environment free from discrimination. **Kendall** is the HELS lead for Athena Swan and Aurora and **French** is leading the SoESW Bronze Award submission in April

2021 to which CSPACE has contributed. CSPACE monthly meetings include a standing agenda item on EDI led by **French** and contributions to the annual University wide xChange festival for International Women's Day are coordinated by Dakka,

Of the last 10 research appointments, eight have been women. This is reflected in the profile of our return with women representing just under two thirds of staff. 7 female academics have been promoted to (Senior) Research Fellow or Reader since REF2014. 3 female colleagues have had periods of maternity leave and a career break since REF2014, with full support to work flexibly, under BCU's Family Friendly policy on their return and retain research bandings, profile, and output production volume.

The Faculty's Programme for Women Achieving Excellence in Research (PoWER) aims to address the issue of women not reaching their full potential in academia. PoWER uses established behaviour change theory to inspire and support women from all disciplines in the Faculty. The programme aims to increase research capacity and capability and builds on existing REF and Athena Swan activity. PoWER was launched in the Faculty in October 2017. A core team of PoWER academics work with participants in groups and individually in a mentoring capacity to identify barriers to progression and devise tailored interventions and action plans to support focused development and research outputs. The first cohort fostered a range of activities including conference presentations, publications and promotions.

**Armstrong, Dakka and Wade** were awarded competitive funding from the Vice Chancellor's Special Investment Fund (2019-20) to research the mental health and wellbeing of doctoral students. The findings from this project, which were presented at a University-wide Symposium in 2020 for students and supervisors are now informing the University's PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy.

All staff directly involved in REF decision making attended Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training provided by AdvanceHE. The Unit took a collective and collaborative approach to building the submission involving all academics with SRR and RAs in all stages of the process to optimise learning, secure succession planning and emphasise our commitment to an open, collegiate and transparent research environment.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### Income

New investment has been used effectively to develop a strong and responsive research infrastructure. This has enabled the team to **build expertise and track record and win £1,349,000 of external income since REF 2014, an increase of over 75%**. As outlined above, a focus on building the income development pipeline has resulted in a more diverse portfolio of project activity that includes funding from UK charities (approximately 50%), the EU, the British Council and more recently UKRI. This varied portfolio provides a secure basis for ongoing development and will ensure CSPACE is not overly impacted by policy changes e.g. in relation to EU funding.

A full-time Research Development and Support Officer (RDSO) supports the notification of funding opportunities, development of bids, tracking of live projects against milestones, developing a portfolio of current publications for CSPACE members and supporting event management. The RDSO is an integral member of CSPACE, attending monthly CSPACE meetings, bid pipeline meetings, planning and research strategy development days, FRC meetings as well as ongoing project review meetings for all CSPACE projects. The quality of bid submissions is supported through an internal peer-review process. For less experienced researchers, the RDSO and professorial team provide dedicated support from the 'develop a bid' stage through to the point of submission.

**Infrastructure and facilities**

The DRC, CSPACE and RIG and REX research support teams (see Section 1) are co-located in a dedicated building, establishing a recognisable and distinctive physical presence. The building houses office space, a research seminar room and top floor studio that supports PGRs working with arts-based practices (**Meares, Morris**). This is complemented by a purpose built, recently refurbished DRC Hub. The DRC hub offers a vibrant, exclusive space for PGRs that provides dedicated desks, computer and photocopier access and kitchen access. The space is co-managed by PGR course representatives and FRDEC. HELS funds a weekly fruit delivery to the hub.

HELS invested £70,000 between 2018 and 2019 in equipment to support fieldwork, data collection and analysis for use by staff and PGR researchers. This includes audio and video recording equipment and a bank of 35 long-loan laptops. All equipment is GDPR compliant and usage is managed through the faculty's GDPR standard operating procedures and protocols, which is overseen by the dedicated Research Integrity officer.

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

CSPACE has formed **strong collaborative partnerships regionally, nationally and internationally** since REF2014 that have enabled us to realise our core research aims. Our staff have taken active and prominent roles in making substantive contributions to the research base, economy and wider society by disseminating and applying our research and sharing our expertise with beneficiaries across diverse communities.

**(Inter)national collaborations with and contributions to the academic community**

CSPACE staff were involved in three collaborative projects with universities in Vietnam, funded by the British Council Vietnam from 2016-2019. The first project involved BCU and Nguyen Tat Thanh University '*Improving employability outcomes through student-centred approaches to learning*.' Two further projects were funded to build on this work and to expand the partnership to include Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy and Vietnam National University. All three projects supported knowledge exchange and researcher capacity building and resulted in two higher education pedagogy summits in Vietnam and the formation of an International Professional Development Association (IPDA) in Vietnam. **Kendall** was subsequently appointed as research lead for the national Vietnam Enhancing Teacher Education (ETEP) programme and awarded a grant from the British Council China (£65,000) to develop a 'Digital Doctoral Training Hub' across 6 institutions in China, Vietnam and Indonesia.

**Kendall** was awarded UKRI GCRF funding for two international collaborative projects in June 2020: GiVE and DaRE. These projects bring together international partners from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Turkey and Uganda to explore strategies for supporting the inclusion of refugee youth in vocational education. Led by **Kendall**, GiVE prioritises the social inclusion of women and girls and using participatory, creative methodologies and working with women teachers as researcher-practitioners will deliver a first time mapping and in-depth exploration of girls' and young women's experiences of vocational education in refugee communities in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Uganda.

The 'Technobabies' project led by **O'Connor**, in collaboration with **Fotakopoulou** from BCU's Psychology department began in 2014 with HELS seed funding. The initial project explored parental attitudes and experiences around the use of touchscreen technology by 0-3 year old children. This research was shared at the European Early Childhood European Research Associations' (EECERA) 2015 conference and international academic partners were recruited to the project. The project has since evolved to include the perspectives and experiences of early years educators in relation to young children's use of technology and the scope of academic partners has expanded to include Japan and Portugal.

We are **active participants and leaders in our scholarly communities**, with the specialist knowledge and skills of CSPACE members often sought as members of key panels and

committees. For example, **Kendall** has held the role of Chair of the International Professional Development Association (IPDA) and Chair of UCET Research and International forum. **Fautley** is a member of the Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research (SEMPRE). **Blackburn, French, Kinsella** and **O'Leary** are all or have been recent convenors of BERA special interest groups. **O'Leary** was appointed as Adjunct Professor at Dublin City University's Further Education Training and Research Centre in recognition of his research in further education in July 2020.

All CSPACE staff are **active members of national research associations** such as BERA, IPDA and SRHE, and regularly present their research at their annual conferences and in their associated journals (e.g. *Professional Development in Education*, *Studies in Higher Education*, *Teaching in Higher Education*).

CSPACE academics are **regularly invited to give keynotes/plenaries to academic and policy forums in the UK and abroad**. A small sample of such work includes:

- 'Educating children and young people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders', keynote by Blackburn for Positive Path International annual conference for special school leaders, Auckland, New Zealand August 2015 (200 senior leaders).
- 'Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment in Music Education: Challenges and Possibilities', Keynote Presentation by Fautley at Australian Society for Music Education (ASME), XXI National Conference, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, 2017.
- 'Giving up' and 'Getting lost' in practice: stories of being and becoming from an accidental leader', keynote by Kendall for the Educational Leadership Effective Administration and Ethical Values conference, University Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November 2017.
- 'Thinking outside the assessment box: using classroom observation to improve teaching and learning' Plenary by O'Leary at BBELT 2018 conference, Hilton Hotel Reforma, Mexico City (1200 English language teachers).
- 'Creativity and creative processes' Leicestershire Music Hub Conference, January 2019, keynote by Kinsella to 150 music teachers.
- 'Pedagogy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century achieving a greater, wider impact of learning' Open College Network, Belfast, Northern Ireland, keynote by Smith.

Many CSPACE members hold **positions of editorship/co-editorship and have been editorial board members** of nine international peer-reviewed international academic journals over this REF period: *Infants and Young Children* (**Blackburn**); *British Journal of Music Education* (**Fautley**); *Journal for Learning Development in Higher Education* (**French**); *Media Education Research Journal, Practice: contemporary issues in practitioner learning* (**Kendall**); *Teaching in Higher Education* (**O'Leary**); *Journal of Educational Administration and History* (**Smith**); *Cogent OA Arts and Humanities Journal* (**Wade**). In addition, members of CSPACE act as reviewers for over 30 academic international peer-reviewed journals

CSPACE members have acted as reviewers for research councils and other funding bodies such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, The Froebel Trust (**Blackburn**), ESRC grant applications (**O'Leary**) and the SRHE Research Awards Panel (**Vigurs**). Many senior researchers also have extensive experience of external and internal examining for doctorates, as well as acting as chairs of doctoral vivas internally and externally at universities in the UK, Ireland, Australia and the USA.

CSPACE members have **developed networks through specialist and discrete international symposia**. For example, the international symposium organised by Dakka 'Chasing Rhythm Encounters At The Edge Of Academic and Epistemological Traditions' brought together experts in rhythm analysis in May 2019 for a first-time exploration of Rhythm analysis in Education.

CSPACE hosts a community of visiting scholars, professors and practitioners. Visiting professorships are held by **Dr Susan Foster-Cohen** (Christchurch, New Zealand) and



**Professors Christine Pascal** and **Tony Bertram** from the internationally esteemed Centre for Research Early Childhood, with whom SoESW has an established collaborative partnership through their MA and SCITT programmes. **Professor Mike Neary** from the University of Lincoln was appointed as a visiting professor in 2019 to support work with Rhythmanalysis and 'academic activism'.

### **Collaborations and contributions to the economy and society**

Many of our projects are participatory and involve researching with teachers, students and members of education communities. Examples include: *FE transforming lives*, *Improving learning and teaching through collaborative observation*, *Open School Doors* and *Good Transitions*. We have also developed educational tools, practices and policy recommendations with participants. Our interactions with groups outside the academic community highlight how our research has had a significant impact on others. For example, *Open School Doors* was a 2-year (2017-19) Erasmus+ funded project which spanned 5 EU contexts (UK, Germany, Greece, Austria and trans-European), with the overall aim of reducing disparities in learning outcomes for children from refugee, asylum seeker and newly arrived migration contexts. BCU worked with eight primary and secondary schools across Birmingham, all of which are Schools of Sanctuary. Their input, along with input from EU partners, informed the creation of an online, multimedia training framework for teachers and school leaders. In 2019, the framework was implemented across all Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary, with a view to it being used by individual practitioners as a reflective tool and as part of a whole-school, holistic approach to develop meaningful and welcoming partnerships with refugee and newly arrived families.

Since 2016, BCU has hosted the high profile, leading-edge national conference ('Reimagining FE') for FE practitioners, leaders, researchers and policy makers. #ReimaginingFE is a grassroots movement founded by PERG members, **O'Leary, Savage and Smith** in collaboration with stakeholders in the wider FE community. Its annual events attract 100+ participants from across the FE sector, including adult and community education, offender learning, colleges, independent training providers, higher education, trade unions and local councils. Not only has our ongoing work with FE practitioners in the UK elevated the importance of research in informing their work and illuminating the value of developing a culture in which practitioners' research capacity is central to improving teaching and learning, but #ReimaginingFE has also been a catalyst for collaborative research. *The role of leadership in prioritising and improving the quality of teaching and learning in further education* project (**O'Leary, Smith, Cui and Dakka**) funded by the Further Education Trust for Leadership (£59,000) is an example of this.

B-MERG is **actively engaged with the arts community in Birmingham** and works closely with the internationally renowned Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and a broad range of regional cultural organisations such as Birmingham Music Education Partnership, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Birmingham Conductive Education Centre and the Big Brum Theatre in Education Company.

In 2020, CSPACE delivered a research-informed public engagement event 'aMAZing stories', funded by the AHRC and British Academy as part of the 'Being Human Festival' which took place in November across the UK. This event involved working with community partners, Birmingham Library, Story Museum (Oxford) and a local artist to make our research accessible to children, young people and families in our local communities.

CSPACE members have been involved in parliamentary debates (**Blackburn** 2018), delivering talks at Westminster Forum events (**Cui** 2019) and (**French** 2019). **O'Leary** was a member of the Ofsted Further Education and Skills Research Reference Group (2018-20), a group of leading academics who informed and advised concerning research relevant to the Ofsted inspection framework for the Further Education and Skills sector. **Fautley** was on the Ofsted consultative committee on inspecting music education and The National Curriculum Expert Subject Advisory Group for Music.

**Contributions to the research base**

Building on the collaborative, multi-layered partnerships of #ReimaginingFE and ensuring that our research is close to practice, two journal special issues by FE practitioners have emerged from the conferences to date:

1. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 2018, 23(1), Special Issue: Reimagining Further Education: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rpce20/23/1>
2. Special edition *CSPACE Journal* (2019) Vol 2(1)  
<http://journals.bcu.ac.uk/index.php/practices-education/issue/view/2>

CSPACE staff shape national conversations through engagement with national media such as: Daily Mirror (**O'Connor**), The Conversation (**Blackburn, Smith**), FE Week (**O'Leary, Smith**), The Times (**O'Connor**), TES (**O'Leary, Smith**), THE (**Vigurs, O'Leary**), WonkHE (**O'Leary**).

In partnership with B-MERG, the OHMI Trust hosted an inaugural conference in September 2018, attracting delegates from 5 different continents. OHMI commented that publishing a report with “big names” (i.e. **Fautley** et al) allowed a small charity to become “more significant in the field of music education”. OHMI have shared this research at a number of events and conferences with 20 music education hub leaders across the country. In addition, **Blackburn's** work with the Ex Cathedra choir on ‘Singing Medicine’ helped to provide an evidence base on which to build an application for subsequent funding from the Froebel Trust.

The doctoral research of our PGRs feeds into institutional policy and practice both within BCU and our partner institutions (e.g. schools and colleges) on cutting-edge topics. For example, **Ludgate's** research on the use of hand-held devices in early years' settings and **Fulford's** research on the experience of ‘local live at home’ university students.