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| Institution: Edge Hill University |
| Unit of Assessment: C23 - Education |
| <p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>Context Edge Hill has trained teachers since 1885, England's first non-denominational teacher-training college for women outside London. Proud of our foundational ethos of free-thinking and equality, we have developed as a socially-inclusive university, addressing the sense of place and regional needs of our communities in north west England, acting as national co-ordinator for Action on Access in the early part of this century, and becoming increasingly international in our reach; this UOA is leading projects and partnerships in China, Laos and Vietnam. This ethos informs the UOA's research mission which is to undertake research and knowledge exchange that is focused on socially-just education, to inform and influence educational policy and practice, especially for those who have been excluded or marginalised by institutional and/or structural barriers, so that all of our communities can take full advantage of the government's 'levelling up' agenda as the world begins to emerge from a global pandemic.</p> <p>How research is structured across the UOA Our UOA has undergone significant changes, renewal and growth since 2014, sufficient to have modified some of our structures and objectives. Of the 13 staff returned in 2014, six have retired, one has moved institution, and another is submitted to UOA4. The changes in our personnel also reflect significant investment in research leadership, with new professors taking up post since 2014, including two professors recruited since the census date.</p> <p>The UOA comprises 28 staff: six professors; one reader, and 21 lecturers or senior lecturers, of whom eight are ECRs. These colleagues come primarily from the four departments of the Faculty of Education plus three staff from other departments, reflecting their close alignment with our research themes. The research centres identified in 2014 were disbanded following a review, and new groupings are emerging, clustered around our impact case studies (see below). These better reflect current work and future directions, and they are more aligned to the UK Research and Development Roadmap.</p> <p>Research objectives 2014-20 Our stated objectives for the period were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to increase the number of those with significant responsibility for research (SRR), 2. to increase the volume of high-quality peer-reviewed outputs, 3. to increase the number of our productive research partnerships, 4. to increase the number of PhD completions, and 5. to increase the volume of research income. <p>We have more than doubled the number of staff submitted to the REF and the volume of outputs, which we believe to be of improved quality. The number of PhD awards has grown from one to 11, and we have developed some new and productive partnerships, including the interdisciplinary flagship Everton in the Community (EitC) programme, which has received £500k for Knowledge Exchange from the OfS/Research England. We are increasingly making bids to established research funders both to secure grants and to achieve greater overheads. We believe our 2014 objectives have been met.</p> <p>Research objectives post-REF2021 The University has invested heavily in our research capacity, especially in the last three years. In the post-REF2021 period our objectives are:</p> |

1. To place impact at the heart of our research activity and to build groups around programmes of research so that they may achieve vitality, sustainability, and critical mass. These are our future research centres in embryo;
2. To increase the number of colleagues with significant responsibility for research who are producing excellent 3* and 4* research through a combination of good recruitment strategy, thoughtful mentoring of ECRs, and effective support for those making the transition to SRR, especially those coming from a background in practice, supported by strong and effective research leadership;
3. To grow further our PGR community, through PhDs and professional doctorates;
4. To increase the number of successful bids for external research funding;
5. To create an inclusive and welcoming research environment which is supportive, outward-looking and engaged with regional, national and global challenges.

Post-REF2021 we aim to secure University approval for a Research Centre for Social Justice Education. This is the next logical step in the realisation of our strategy to become internationally recognised for research in this area and will build on the successes of existing groups and networks. In 2014 the University set out rigorous criteria for the establishment of research centres which requires centres to be of a size sufficient to achieve critical mass, and to develop measurable funding and impact strategies. Establishing the Centre will, therefore, strengthen our commitment to the development of socially-just methodologies for educational research and provide support for the Unit's ECRs and those transitioning to research independence in this area. The new centre will also be affiliated to the Institute for Social Responsibility (ISR) which will provide support for events and enhance inter-disciplinary working across the University and through ISR's wider networks.

We will extend our sub-theme of inclusivity via partnership-working through the development of outdoor-education research, contributing to the sense of place research agenda. The Faculty of Education has already established a 'forest school' on campus, a facility used by local primary schools. Building on our teaching and engagement activity, we will seek to develop this area for research using this expertise. To do so we will increase and strengthen our networks with schools and local-authority partners. This will include work with a network of schools and organisations developing beach schools in the region, on the Sefton and Fylde coasts. Working together with early years providers, coastal landowners, environmental organisations, teachers and the University's existing connections through its Department of Geography and Geology, we will work collaboratively to devise principles that will develop the way beach schools are practised; transforming teaching and learning expertise into research and knowledge exchange on inclusivity in educational approaches and practice.

We will also be developing our partnership working through our Research Circle Framework in which we work collaboratively with educational institutions to design and implement participatory action research that promotes equality in education. We currently have agreements with seven nurseries across the North West region (on the entitlement to nursery provision); with a teaching school alliance in Wigan (on speech development), and with a nursery school (on its role in developing cultural capital) to facilitate this. The Unit will also extend its work with a network of research schools – which has started with Meols Cop High School in Southport – to help develop the quality and scope of teacher-led research to benefit outcomes for all children, regardless of background, as a contribution to the government's 'levelling up' agenda.

How the UOA has sought to enable the achievement of impact

Since 2014 we have shifted the focus of our research groupings and recruitment strategy to coalesce around programmes of work most likely to benefit partners and communities:

1. **Higher education policy & practice** addressing a range of issues in higher education. Centred on our established strengths in widening access and widening participation (**Thomas**), we have broadened the focus to include student success, student engagement and belonging, and the disconnect felt by commuter students (**Thomas, Nicholson**). We have sought to add international reach to our well-established expertise

in this area through the appointment of **Cheng**, who brings a fresh approach to working with international students at risk of marginalisation in UK HEIs, complemented by **Allan's** international work on disseminating good practice in higher education institutions. This is complemented by work on ethical dilemmas in professional education (**Shortt**), the importance of personal tutoring (**Yale**) and mentoring in HE (**Woolhouse**), as well as student support and the student experience (**Cheng, Fulford, Irving-Bell**), the impact of quality and evaluation in HE (**Bostock, Cheng**), and the operationalisation of the philosophy of higher education to challenge policy and enhance practice for leaders and academics in the sector (**Beattie, Fulford**).

2. **Teaching, learning, assessment & curriculum** is centred on the 'Transforming Lives' project (**Duckworth**) which has provided evidence for policy-makers of how the further education (FE) sector is vital to learners and communities in 21st century Britain (**Duckworth, Williams**). Long-standing areas of research at Edge Hill, such as that of **Dunne**, have been supplemented by more recent appointments enabling greater specialisation in socially-just pedagogy (**Fulford**), curricular access and curriculum subjects (**Garrett; Henshall, McVeigh, Shirley**), early years education (**Albin-Clark, Boardman**), and test anxiety (**Liversidge, Nicholson**).
3. **Difference, inclusion & identity** groups around special educational needs (**Hallett, Beer, Sealy**), narrative and storied lives and marginalised experiences (**Hallett, Woolhouse**), the roles of gender, identity, sexuality, and race, examining the perceptions of teachers, pupils, trainee teachers and teacher educators in order to address educational inequalities and the marginalisation of particular groups of students (**Farrell, McAteer**), marginalisation and disadvantages of children (**Allan, Robinson**).
4. **Children's rights & wellbeing** is an emerging strand which includes work on student voice, children's rights, mental health and wellbeing (**Boardman, Hallett, O'Keeffe, Robinson**). Our flagship project in this area, and likely future case study, is **Robinson's** work with Liverpool City Council (LCC) on achieving Unicef Child Friendly City (CFC) status. This will positively impact on children's lives by embedding a commitment to children's rights, and investing in children's health (especially mental health in the wake of the pandemic), well-being and development in our region, which suffers from historic disadvantage.

In all themes, researchers are encouraged to establish partnerships and work with these to help identify research priorities. Some of the partnerships stem from the broader work of the Faculty and we actively encourage our practice-based colleagues to engage with research projects to support effective partnerships. This reflects our approach of having a 'mixed economy' in our research clusters of staff at different career stages, including those not yet independent researchers, so that colleagues can benefit from each other's expertise and collaborations to help identify synergies and grow partnerships. We also use internal support funds to help identify strategic priorities with partners that are of mutual interest and benefit. By working closely with partners, our research can have a positive impact, while keeping a focus on the needs of practitioners and learners.

The UOA has a well-established history of undertaking research which studies, informs and enhances social and educational inclusion, equity and access (**Thomas**). Our work is disseminated to teachers and the school/college leadership teams through seminars, workshops and school visits by staff, again maximising the mixed staffing base. As well as appointing professors with previous experience of achieving impact (**Cheng, Fulford, Robinson**), we have also engaged three visiting professors from outside the UK (USA, Spain, South Africa) to broaden further our research horizons and to introduce new networks and pathways to impact which will extend the range and influence of our work.

To improve the quality and consistency of our impact strategy, we draw on the experience, advice and guidance provided by the University's Research Office. We ensure that staff with SRR and those with research-career aspirations participate in impact training and discussion so that the nuances of impact are well understood before individuals or groups embark on research projects. This training has included a workshop run by Prof. Mark Reed (co-founder of Fast

Track Impact). We encourage individuals to apply for institutional IKEF funding which is reserved specifically for the support of impact arising from published research. Both **Thomas** and **Duckworth** have received IKEF awards in this REF period to enhance their case studies.

The three impact case studies come from groups formed around three professors, all of whom were part of the UOA in 2014. In each instance, their external networks and partnerships pre-date recent changes within the UOA and they demonstrate a continuity of research and impact agenda:

- **Thomas**' 'Improving Equity and Outcomes in Higher Education' investigates the relationship between engagement, belonging, retention and success. She was a member of the TEF panel for HEFCE/OfS, produced commissioned research for Advance HE ('Increasing diversity: tackling underrepresentation of protected student groups in higher education', 2020), for OFFA ('Understanding a whole institution approach to widening participation', 2017) and for the QAA/HEA ('Effective practice in the design of directed learning opportunities', 2014/15). Her work has informed national policies, institutional strategies and individual practice in the UK, Europe and Australia.
- **Duckworth**'s 'Transforming Lives', a collaboration with Birmingham City University and funded by the UCU, has showcased how FE is transformative for lives and communities. She is a trustee of the Helena Kennedy Foundation and a Board member of the Association for Research in Post-Compulsory Education, and her work contributed to national policy thinking on the future of Further Education.
- **Hallett** has worked with Tate Liverpool on a joint photo elicitation project (exhibition 'Spaces imagining inclusion and belonging', June 2018). The project explored inclusion/exclusion of children in and from formal education, across our region (including the Isle of Man). The exhibition resources have been shared with a network of schools in the region as part of Tate Exchange, and it is an example of our research contributing to the UK R&D place agenda. This is one of several impactful partnerships the UOA has developed with Tate Liverpool.

Commitment to open research

We are committed to open research as outlined in the EHU Policy on Open Research. All our outputs are deposited in the University research repository (Pure). We have developed and promoted a culture of open research by hosting presentations and workshops on OA and data-sharing, by disseminating University-wide information and opportunities, and by embedding discussion within our Faculty's Research Committee. We have effectively promoted the use of 'read-and-publish' deals the University has signed with publishers (including Taylor and Francis, SAGE and Wiley) with staff utilising opportunities across all relevant publishers. We support internal funding applications for gold OA, encourage the use of research rewards (University funding to reward grant capture) to support publication costs, and advise inclusion of these costs in external funding applications. We have started to disseminate freely-available research outputs through Figshare; these include posters, training seminars and research-informed teaching resources.

In the next REF cycle, along with promoting OA for journal articles, we will explore with Library and Learning Services options for OA books and chapters; for example, by working with Open Book Publishers, university presses and other publishers, and building on the steps we have already taken by making chapters OA wherever possible. We believe that a commitment to open research is an important way of reaching greater audiences, particularly HE colleagues in developing countries and research-users who may not have the same access to libraries and subscriptions. Given our partnerships with countries on the ODA list and our commitment to working in collaboration to promote socially-just education, this is a particular priority.

Statement on research integrity

Given our research interests, integrity and ethical practice is at the heart of what we do. We are committed to respecting the dignity of all those involved in our research processes and PIs are responsible for ensuring the integrity of their projects. We work in tandem with the University's

research governance infrastructure which promotes and assures research integrity. The University recently revised its ethical infrastructure and Farrell was part of the working group that established new processes and procedures, including establishing five subject RECs. The Education Research Ethics Committee (EREC), chaired by Fulford, considers the majority of ethics applications made within the Unit. The EREC acts as a sub-committee of, and reports to, the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URESC). We fully engage with debates and standards regarding research integrity led by our professional associations, such as BERA, as well as national bodies such as the UK Research Integrity Office.

Support for researchers developing applications is headed by a team led by **Farrell** who also provides training as part of the Unit's Research Development Programme. To help embed high ethical standards, the Unit has established a Research Ethics Advisory Panel (REAP) made up of ECRs. Supported by **Farrell**, members of the Panel develop expertise in research ethics and governance, and provide initial scrutiny of ethical clearance applications. Experienced members of REAP can then seek a position on the full Education Research Ethics Committee (EREC).

2. People

Excellent research-active staff with strong collaborative links to practice are key to the realisation of our research goals. Our staffing strategy since 2014 has focused on capacity building, informed by a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. We have sought to redress the balance of our staffing profile by appointing and investing in the development of those whose ambitions include a research career. Our strategy has resulted in a 115% increase in staff being submitted to REF2021 (21/25.2fte) relative to REF2014 (13/11.7fte).

Recruitment strategy

Since 2014, we have prioritised the recruitment of staff, in line with principles and best practice of equality and diversity, whose research generally fits with our overarching research commitment to socially-just education, as well as the capacity to be excellent teachers, and the disposition to be effective and collaborative colleagues. The UOA has undergone substantial change since 2014, with all members of the professoriate except **Thomas** (0.6 FTE) having retired or otherwise departed. In renewing the team, our strategy has been to strengthen research leadership through effective recruitment; **Cheng, Fulford** (Associate Dean: Research and Impact), and **Robinson** (0.6 FTE) were all appointed in open competition on the strength of their track records, their potential and their fit with our research priorities. We have complemented that recruitment strategy with nurturing the careers of existing colleagues: **Duckworth** and **Hallett** were promoted to personal chairs in the REF period. Along with a reader (**Woolhouse**, also promoted during the period), these colleagues provide leadership across the UOA as the Research Strategy Group (RSG). Further recruitment is also planned with a view to strengthening the quality of our research and planning for future impact case studies.

The success of this recruitment strategy is evidenced by the growth since 2014 in the number of staff with SRR and of staff holding doctorates across the Faculty. After recruiting strong candidates, we have then sought to ensure that they are well-supported. The success of research mentoring means that there has been an increase in the number of mid-career researchers applying for internal promotion to reader and professor roles, with five readership applications made in 2020, two successful. A priority for post-REF2021, identified in our Athena Swan action plan, is to review the career aspirations of our senior lecturers so we can refocus our development support to enhance career pipelines.

Our recruitment strategy will be reinforced by ensuring that there is greater diversity in our invited speakers and visiting professors who may act as role models for staff and students alike, as well as introducing peers from diverse backgrounds to Edge Hill so that, when recruitment opportunities arise, they are already familiar with us as an institution.

Staff development

Our approach to staff development is guided by the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. We aim to provide a supportive environment that promotes wellbeing through appropriate workload allocation, good research planning, and training and development opportunities to ensure that everyone is able to reach their potential. Our collegial team-based approach provides excellent mentor and peer support for staff at all career stages. Our staff-development programme has supported colleagues at various stages of their research journey by maximising benefit from, and the experience and skills of, our research-active staff.

Many of our appointments come from practice backgrounds, as is common for faculties of education. In supporting our ambitions to increase research capacity we highlight, during induction, the University's career development pathways and the support available to develop a research career. Induction is also a vital to inculcating new staff into the research culture and ensuring that they understand the governance and research integrity standards the University requires. Identifying support for research is also an integral part of subsequent probation and annual PDR meetings. Annual PDR identifies agreed objectives and development needs, including research, which are revisited throughout the year. PDRs inform annual workload planning (allocation of time and resources); those with SSR are allocated time and resources for research to support the achievement of their agreed PDR objectives. If staff do not have SRR, they identify as making their journey towards SRR (apprentice researchers) or as focusing on other aspects of the academic role. The former (often doing PhDs or other doctoral qualifications) are allocated enhanced staff development. Nearly a third of colleagues submitted on this occasion have come through the route from professional practice to SRR during the cycle. Nine of those submitted were supported to complete PhDs and then become independent researchers during the period, and a further eight colleagues completed PhDs and are now being supported through mentoring to achieve research independence in the next REF period.

Researcher development is central to the work of the Unit. This commitment is most clearly seen in the Unit's apprenticeship scheme, supervisor forum and seminar series, which complement the University's comprehensive Researcher Development Programme. Our enhanced research capacity and the transformation in the number of colleagues with SRR is partly the product of our apprenticeship scheme, which was designed to facilitate staff transitioning to research independence, particularly for those staff recently arrived from practice. It involved staff working with a research mentor and has resulted in the publication of 12 papers - seven of which are submitted to this REF.

While successful, we recently reflected on the apprenticeship scheme's achievement and its fitness-for-purpose for a universal REF. This has led to the development of a new 3-strand mentoring scheme, led by **Robinson**, which builds on the evaluation of the apprenticeship scheme, and has been extended to offer opportunities to all colleagues. The first strand of the scheme provides 1:1 mentoring in one or more of: (i) writing for publication – usually publishing from your doctorate, (ii) writing funding bids (internal first, and later external), (iii) understanding the impact agenda, and (iv) developing research partnerships. In this tier, priority is accorded to ECRs. The second strand is that of Research Buddy. This is open to colleagues at all career stages, and it involves one or more of: (i) providing feedback on a draft article, (ii) discussing options of journals for submission of an article, (iii) discussing feedback from reviewers (e.g., journal paper or funding bid), and (iv) acting as critical reader for a book proposal, funding bid or promotion bid on the research track. The third strand is designed specifically for our apprentice researchers and those who are becoming independent researchers. It is designated the Research Project strand and it provides opportunities for groups of academic colleagues (typically consisting of a deliberate mix of more and less experienced colleagues) to work together and provide co-mentoring. The specific focus of projects under this strand will be determined by colleagues, but each project should relate to the work of one the four departments within the Faculty and will be expected to lead to publications and, in the longer term, have the potential for impact.

The UOA engages fully with the University's internal funding schemes which are central to supporting individuals to develop their research profiles through publication, conference attendance, impact activities and income generation. We have been awarded £187k in such support funds since 2014 – this has been vital to supporting a unit in development with 29% ECRs. Three members of staff have benefited from teaching relief (£56k in total) to allow them to progress their projects, while others have employed research assistants to support data collection and analysis. Staff have also been supported to attend international conferences to present their work and build networks, vital to promoting an international perspective. Staff have also benefited from targeted impact funds (IKEF) to support projects and relationship development. Plans for internal funding bids are discussed in PDRs to ensure that all consider how funds may support them and less experienced staff are encouraged to consider participation in team projects. Part-time staff have also made effective use of the funds; while this is generally on a pro-rata basis, we do not apply that to conference support.

We hold regular seminars and an annual research day which foregrounds impact as a vital part of the research process. Staff from this UOA regularly participate in activities organised through the ISR whose remit is to promote interdisciplinary research and public engagement, including through an annual Festival of Ideas which brings prospective users of our research on to campus for discussion, debate and networking. The ISR also provides support and resources, such as public events, blogs and writing retreats to support researcher development. The writing retreats were extended late in the REF cycle to support the needs of PGRs, apprentice researchers and ECRs who were finding it difficult to write during Covid-19 lockdown. The UOA supplemented these during lockdown with a series of Faculty-wide research cafés, some of which were held over summer 2020. These popular events were themed (on strategies for starting, and continuing, writing; on researcher wellbeing, and on sharing what we were reading), in response to feedback, including from the regular PGR catch-up meetings hosted by the PGR Co-ordinator and Director of Research.

The postgraduate research community

The Unit has realised its aim to have a lively and engaged postgraduate research (PGR) community with 7 PhD, 1 MPhil and 1 MRes awards, and 21 postgraduate research students currently registered. In addition, 19 members of academic staff are currently undertaking doctoral study. This demonstrates our investment in the next generation of researchers and our commitment to the sustainability of the discipline. Central to having achieved this highly engaged and successful PGR community is the University's competitive Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) scheme. The Unit's Research Strategy plans to enhance the doctoral community through securing external funding for PhD studentships and through attracting high quality self-funded PhD applications. At present, we do not have a professional doctorate programme and are in the process of proposing such a programme (to commence October 2021). The increased research capacity and the strength of PGR supervisory teams is shown in the very much improved PhD success rate in this period (11 compared with one in 2014).

The PGR community enhances the research environment through attending and delivering seminars organised by research groups and networks; through presenting at the annual Faculty research conference (ACRE), and through delivering research-informed teaching in their work as GTAs. In further enriching the research environment, GTA students host a series of events as part of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ECR Network Symposium Series: 'Analytical Approaches in Educational Research'. GTAs also initiate their own activities, including a highly successful international philosophy of education reading network.

Woolhouse is PGR co-ordinator and **Hallett** leads the MRes provision across the University as a seconded role in the Graduate School. These roles ensure that effective, high-quality training is in place, and that supervisory teams are allocated to students on the basis of subject and methodological expertise, and capacity. Each doctoral student is allocated a team of up to three supervisors led by a director of studies. Teams may also include an advisor, someone with practice experience but without the research profile to permit them to supervise, who supports the team and provides professional expertise; this approach contributes to ensuring that capacity

for supervision is enhanced, and that appropriate supervisory skills can be developed within a supportive team.

A specialist programme of training in research methods and approaches is delivered in partnership with the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine. Doctoral students are eligible to apply for support for conference attendance from the bursary scheme. The cost associated with such applications is jointly met by the Unit itself and the University Graduate School. Supporting conference attendance, particularly for presentation, ensures that doctoral students are inducted into their respective academic communities, benefit from expert feedback on their ideas and emerging research findings, and start to build connections within the field.

The PGR Co-ordinator also provides a professional development forum for supervisors. This provides a detailed induction to the role; enables networking and sharing strategies for dealing with difficult issues in supervision; considers case studies and explores best practice in supervision and the provision of feedback. The forum receives updates on developments to student support and wellbeing services available to PGRs. This support complements that available from the University's Graduate School via their core training and development, and newsletters. The University also uses a postgraduate virtual learning environment – Blackboard - which is available to all PGRs and supervisors.

The Unit supports PGRs with career preparation and employability by providing development sessions on applying for academic roles; offers mock interviews, and invites PGRs to sit as observers on academic interview panels to gain experience of the selection process.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Unit's commitment to socially-just education as the unifying theme is fully integrated into the way in which its policies and practices around the leadership, coordination and support for research are managed. This promotes equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do. While we are committed to inclusion and social justice, we acknowledge, however, that we lack diversity as a submission: only 4% identify as BAME; over half are in the 45-54 age group; none has a declared disability; our gender balance is 75% female and 25% male; seven women and one man hold fractional posts (29%). All those submitted in this UOA hold continuing contracts.

As is typical for the discipline, we are a female dominated Faculty and that is reflected in our UOA submission. We are also aware of our lack of ethnic diversity which, again, reflects sector norms. A key priority is to review, in collaboration with HR and Graduate School colleagues, how we manage our recruitment process for attracting staff and PGRs, particularly how and where we advertise opportunities, to ensure that we reach a more diverse pool and encourage applications from under-represented groups. Since the census point, when 100% of the research leadership group were female (professoriate and readers), we have appointed two male professors and promoted two male readers, which has introduced some gender balance to our research leadership group and supports our future vitality and sustainability.

Recruitment of PGRs aligns with our research themes so that they are supported strongly within rich and increasingly diverse communities of practice. The gender and ethnicity balance amongst PGRs (67% female and 90% identifying as white) is similar to that for the staff submitted. We will be particularly mindful to extend the reach of our GTA programme to attract a more diverse pool of applicants, which is important not just to our UOA, but to the pipeline of our discipline generally. We will also work with undergraduate students from under-represented groups to encourage them to consider research careers and to be the next generation of researchers, since we need to invest for the long-term. As part of our commitment to embedding EDI principles, we have recently undertaken a rigorous self-assessment for our Athena Swan application (to be submitted April 2021). We believe effective action also comes from taking part in sector-wide initiatives to address entrenched EDI issues, including recruiting a diverse range of people at all career stages, as PGRs and undergraduates.

29% of the UOA have part-time contracts. We actively support applications for fractional appointments and they are represented at all career stages. While most have been appointed to these posts, some have come as a result of requests by colleagues who wish to change their work-life balance. This is managed at departmental level and agreed with managers. We also accommodate more informal flexibility through workload management to facilitate time for research. This flexibility helps us to support a healthy work-life balance, reflecting our commitment to support the wellbeing of researchers.

Given our age profile, we are committed to ensuring appropriate succession planning. The Research Strategy Group also supports succession planning for research leadership through inclusion, not only of the professors and readers, but also of research fellows, the research projects co-ordinator and the research administrator. All staff are encouraged to undertake professional development to support their applications for promotion and are given opportunities to engage in activities, such as representing the Faculty in University committees, which will broaden their experience.

Our REF output selection process has EDI considerations at its core and followed the University's REF Code of Practice. Led by two professors, all staff with SRR have been involved in peer review; this has had many benefits – it introduces staff to each other's work and helps all to understand the REF processes more fully. External review was used for a random selection of outputs and where there was no agreement on ranking. Our REF2 broadly reflects the demographics in REF1: men's outputs are slightly over-represented (reflecting senior men who have left), but otherwise the contribution of staff with different characteristics is representative and reflects their numbers in the submission.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Strategic approach to income generation

Our income level in the period is broadly similar to that reported in 2014. Relatively recent changes in personnel and structures are yet to bear fruit in terms of research funding and we recognise the need to introduce a more robust internal review process for grant applications within the unit. Now that we have a strong team of professors and readers in place, we will identify senior researchers to provide focused mentorship and guidance at the grant-development stage, and enhanced feedback on applications, building on the mentorship programme identified above.

The UOA targets a range of funders. We recognise that we are building our funding profile so have a range of approaches:

1. For those who have an established research profile but no track record, we encourage them to start with smaller bids to funders such as the British Academy
2. For those with a track record with smaller funding bids, we encourage a step-up up to larger bids (£20-50k) with higher cost-recovery rates, largely with research councils
3. To develop larger bids, particularly those over £100k, we encourage researchers to seek collaborations to make multi-centre bids with colleagues in other HEIs
4. Where appropriate to the project, we bid for UK and EU government funds, often with partners.
5. We also seek to submit bids with practice partners to non-typical funders with respect to research and this may include contract research; these are often a result of partnership building which is central to our overall ethos.

We will refine this approach for the new REF cycle, taking a more strategic approach and identifying suitable funding streams which will be discussed in the Research Strategy Group. There will be an expectation that senior researchers make at least one bid per year and will actively seek partners and collaborators to strengthen bids. We will also seek to generate interdisciplinary partnerships with colleagues in other UOAs and make pump-priming bids to RIF

to establish a track record of research. In doing so, we will engage more fully with the UKRI R&D roadmap, including the 'place strategy', and current government's levelling-up agenda.

Staff development for grant bidding has included training and workshops on writing grant applications provided by the ISR and the Research Office. It was also important that staff were made aware of funding calls and these are now disseminated directly to relevant staff in the unit. Strategic management of workloads has made blocks of time available to researchers at all career stages to write funding bids while internal funds (RIF and IKEF) have been used to pump-prime external grant applications. Plans for funding applications are discussed in PDRs to ensure that the proper support is in place to enable researchers to make the most competitive bids.

The Unit's strategy has been to tap into internal resources through the RIF, which supports smaller-scale projects and to pump prime bids for external funding. This acts as a form of staff development in confidence-building for bidders in a relatively supportive and nurturing environment. During the period, **Hallett** and **Woolhouse** received IKEF for research which now underpins one of our impact case-studies, and **Thomas** received 20k to support work which underpins her case study. Central to our approach has been peer-support working where experienced academics work with less experienced colleagues to provide advice, guidance and mentoring during the bid writing process. This approach has seen colleagues who have previously received RIF funding make bids to the British Academy, the Spencer Foundation, and to the John Templeton Foundation (**McAteer**, **Nicholson**, **Woolhouse**).

There was a step change mid-REF cycle with the strengthening of the professoriate; this has had a positive impact on the number of high-value bids made with other HEIs. An example is **Robinson's** work on children's rights and her work on Liverpool as a Child Friendly City. Connections made through this project led to a bid with the University of Liverpool to the UKRI Adolescence, Mental Health and the Developing Mind funding programme. A further bid was made with the Institute of Education, UCL, to the UKRI Outlines scheme on ethnic minority children and pandemic-related wellbeing. We will work closely with the University on improving bids for external funding in the next REF period, with a view to attracting funds which bring in overheads.

Funders are identified which align with the unit's distinctive priorities and research trajectory: for example, the Spencer Foundation was targeted as it invests particularly in educational research that cultivates learning and transforms lives. **McAteer's** Newton Fellowship funding reflects the close alignment of the Unit's priority to forge partnerships to leverage more prestigious grants, as well as enhancing the internationalisation of our research, including in ODA countries.

Duckworth's funding from UCU, the Further Education Trust for Leadership, and the Helena Kennedy Foundation has led to research that underpins an impact case study and reflects our approach of working with partners to develop projects of mutual interest. **Thomas'** funding from Health Education England and the Research Council of Norway similarly adds international reach to her work on widening participation and student success across disciplines and national boundaries. **Cheng's** AHRC funding, our first from a research council, for her project 'Supporting Young People to Become International Creative Talents: Educational Enterprise Collaborations between Shanghai and Liverpool', brought researchers, employers, and creative practitioners together to establish a new international network and identify best practice to support young people to become creative talents.

Allan's collaboration with 13 partners (five European, six in Vietnam and two in Laos) on the CATALYST project (European Commission) was aimed at developing teaching methodologies in south-east Asia and devising a series of modules designed to disseminate good practice in HEIs. A further collaboration with researchers from Oslo Met, NIFU and the Danish Centre for Social Research is exploring the retention and success of under-represented groups in professional-education programmes that specifically prepare students for employment in the public sector.

Post-REF2021, we plan to build on these successes, increasing further the number of bids made, the number of larger collaborative bids with other organisations, and those with higher cost recovery rates. We will specifically focus on pump priming for 'proof of concept' and use the ISR facilities as well as our research networks to build research teams ready to align to specific funding calls.

During the REF period, Edge Hill has made a major investment in the construction of a state-of-the-art new library (The Catalyst) which provides the resources, tools, and expertise needed to support the research and teaching activities of the Education team. The UOA's research is supported by a dedicated librarian and specialised research support for students and staff, which includes advice on finding literature, navigating electronic journals and databases, using specialist research software, and managing research data. Researchers are well supported by subscriptions to digital archives — including collections of newspapers, periodicals, parliamentary papers, and specialist research materials. Dedicated research space is available for PGRs on the quiet top floor of the library, to complement their desk spaces in the Faculty.

Our infrastructure is designed to embed research in all areas. Previously, research had been carried out largely in a separate department, but professors and readers are now located within departments, each of which has a research committee. We are aware that research is more developed in some areas than others, so our priority for the next five years is to ensure that research develops more evenly across the Faculty; this will be supported with research-active heads in each department. We are also building structures to support interdisciplinary research by working more closely with colleagues in other faculties to enhance research projects through collaboration.

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

Contribution to the research base

We believe that research should extend beyond academia, and staff work closely with the ISR to organise events that engage with academic and non-academic stakeholders, to ensure that research benefits a wide range of people. As such, we pursue connections, collaborations and networks that enhance our understanding and quality of research in education, look to widen the reach of our research outcomes through the creation of knowledge and ensure their relevance through impact. To that end, we seek to engage in events that are tied to the main research themes of the unit and the strategic priorities of the University. Staff have also contributed to ISR's international blog on Covid-19 from ECRs (**Albin-Clark**); established researchers (**McAteer** and **Farrell**), the Unit's professors (**Fulford** and **Robinson**), and visiting professors (Bryer).

Our work with ISR has helped to develop internal and external networks: for example, **McAteer** has initiated the CREATE network which draws in researchers from across the University to explore how 'participatory' research is enacted in order to capture experiences of the excluded. The network has developed engagement with Action for Refugees and RefuAid – a charity that supports access to language tuition, education, finance and meaningful employment for those experiencing forced migration. This network has built up a repository of resources and has also organised study days in collaboration with the external Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), involving internationally recognised keynote speakers. **McAteer** was the convenor of the national CARN conference in 2018 and has been the CARN liaison officer for the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA).

ISR also facilitated fruitful collaboration internally with the Department of Sport & Physical Activity and externally with Tate Liverpool and with Everton in the Community, leading to the Tackling the Blues programme. Funded by the English Premier League, this collaborative project is focused on student-led mental health and wellbeing practice for young people. **O'Keeffe** and **Smith** (UOA24) have led this project, and KE investment from OfS/Research England has enabled it to scale up its activities, involving students in the research process. Through the

reflective use of sport and creative arts, participants have reported improvements in mental wellbeing, their quantity and quality of social relationships, and engagement in their academic study. The programme's success was recognised in November 2016 by *The Times Higher Education* awards, receiving the Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community award for, in the view of educational and health professionals, the positive contribution that it had made in this challenging area. Tackling the Blues has also been featured on BBC Radio 5 Live for World Mental Health Day, and in February 2017 was featured on BBC Match of the Day 2 with Everton first team player Leighton Baines attending a Tackling the Blues session. Its work has gained further significance during lockdown. It is presented as a case study in UOA24.

Alongside **O'Keeffe's** work with Everton and the Tate, we have established other policy-oriented partnerships. We have established trusted engagement with stakeholders in lifelong learning and HE, with national public-sector organisations such as EFCE, OFFA, OfS, Advance HE, QAA (**Thomas**), and with local authorities such as Liverpool City Council (**Robinson**), seeking to ensure that research projects are informed directly by users and funders. We seek to achieve impact for our work through influencing national policy, the enhancement of professional practice, and the improvement of our region's educational attainment and well-being.

We also seek to shape the field of education more broadly through engagement in learned societies, through membership of editorial boards, and keynote speaking engagements. **Allan** edits the online open-access journal *Prism: Casting New Light on Learning, Theory and Practice*. **Hallett** is joint editor of the *British Journal of Special Education*. **Cheng** sits on the international advisory boards of *Quality in Higher Education* and *Chinese Education and Society*. Membership of editorial boards include: **Duckworth** on *Research in Post Compulsory Education*, *PRACTICE: Contemporary Issues in Practice Education*, and the international advisory board of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*. **Fulford** on *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* and the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, and **Thomas** on the *Higher Education Quarterly*. In addition, **Nicholson** is associate editor of the *British Journal of Educational Psychology* and a consulting editor of *Education Psychology*.

Members of our UOA contribute to a range of national and international organisations. **Cheng** peer reviews for the ESRC's Global Challenges Research Fund. **Duckworth** is a trustee of the Helena Kennedy Foundation and sits on the board of the Association for Research in Post-Compulsory Education. **Fulford** serves on the Governing Council of the Society for Research in Higher Education, is an elected Executive Board member of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain and its current Conference Chair. **McAteer** sits on the International Advisory Panel on Social Publishers Foundation. **Nicholson** is Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and sits on the committee of the British Psychological Society's Psychology of Education Section.

Outputs from the Unit contribute not only to the development of the field of educational research, but also to pedagogy and professional practice. In the field of research methods, **Duckworth's** co-authored book, *Research Methods for Social Justice and Equity in Education* makes a significant new contribution to the field of research methods writing and underscores the Unit's commitment to socially-just education research. **Fulford's** co-authored monograph, *Philosophy and Theory in Educational Research: Writing in the Margins* is one of the first critical volumes from the field of philosophy of education to address philosophical approaches to educational research. Her edited volume *Philosophy and Community: Theories, Practices and Possibilities* is the leading work addressing issues of education and social justice in relation to public philosophy. **Woolhouse** and **Nicholson's** edited volume, *Mentoring in Higher Education*, makes a significant contribution to thinking about mentoring for social justice.

Collaboration and contribution to economy and society

Our goal of international excellence in the field of socially-just education research and knowledge exchange is also aligned to the social, cultural, economic, education, employment and political agendas across the key institutions regionally. Our deep and strong connections with schools and other educational settings allows us to pivot our research to initiatives like the

Northern Powerhouse, the 'levelling up' agenda, and key regional initiatives on health and education, whilst retaining our research focus on the most vulnerable, those who lack access to support and guidance or who are marginalised/excluded. Latterly, lockdown caused by the global pandemic has added an urgency to, but also frustrated to some extent, our initiatives in this regard.

Particular collaborations and partnerships have been forged that align with the Unit's research priorities and themes, and so support and extend the Unit's reach and impact in society. We therefore have ongoing and embryonic work that will form the basis of future impact in these areas, specifically:

- **Thomas** has helped shape the UK's Widening Participation and access strategy as an expert member of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) main panel, and as an external reviewer for the Irish Higher Education Authority Access Office, allocating funding for widening participation initiatives. She was also a member of the UK Social Mobility working group, advising and reporting to the Minister.
- **Robinson** is a founding member of the Human Rights Education for All Alliance and is Expert Advisor for UNICEF Finland's Rights Respecting Schools programme. She is working closely with Liverpool City Council, bidding to have Liverpool designated a UNICEF Child Friendly City. In 2019 she was invited by the Chairman of the Care of Children in Jersey Review Panel to comment on the Draft Law relating to the powers of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey and in 2018 invited to contribute to an all-party parliamentary group meeting at the House of Commons focusing on a vision for public (including school-based) Legal and Human Rights Education.
- **Cheng's** project funded by the Humanities and Social Science Youth Foundation of China's Ministry of Education. Collaborating with universities in Beijing, this project is investigating the identity transformation and reintegration of Chinese student returnees, and seeks to develop a best practice model for reintegration. **Cheng's** current work and this project will contribute to the economic and social development to both UK and China, ensuring that students are more effectively integrated into the UK, facilitating a better experience and outcomes; and that they are able to reintegrate into Chinese society on their return. This will allow students to be productive and active members of both the economy and society, and to use their UK experience and qualifications therein. In addition, **Cheng** won the 2020 Award for Innovative Research in International Education for an article which explored and compared how Scottish and Australian universities integrated international and intercultural elements into their curriculum to support Chinese postgraduate taught students' study.
- **Nicholson's** collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University (2018-2020) on engaging students for their GCSE examinations, and the role of teacher messages and student emotions. This project will develop interventions on improving GCSE outcomes in our region. This project has also provided opportunities for Nicholson to develop independence and submit an output for REF 2021.
- Led by **O'Keeffe**, we have also established a collaboration with the University of Central Florida on the theme of children and disadvantage. This collaboration extends the Unit's work on two of its central research themes: children's rights and wellbeing (as seen in **Robinson's** research), and on inclusion, marginalisation and disadvantage (as seen in the work of **Hallett, Woolhouse** and **Allan**). It is anticipated that this international collaboration will generate research and knowledge exchange in the next REF period that will have demonstrable output on the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children, both in the England's north west, and in Florida state.

As part of its commitment to contributing to the knowledge base of educational research, and to supporting inclusive approaches in the field, the Unit is also pioneering collaborative research

with teachers in research schools (a network of schools supported by the Education Endowment Foundation to use research evidence to improve teaching and learning). The Unit will extend its successful pilot programme of research circles in early years settings, to work with a broader range of institutions to build on the success of this model, the Unit is working together with schools represented on its Strategic Partnership Board to identify areas for research on which the school and the Unit are equal partners in the planning, conduct and publication of the research in the area of socially-just education and the improvement of outcomes for children from all backgrounds. We have worked to engage teachers through agreeing the themes for our annual conferences (ACRE 2017's theme was 'Children, Young People, their Care and Education: Critical issues in interdisciplinary research and practice') and we have hosted book launches at the conference where we celebrated publication of textbooks aimed at teachers.

These projects signal our ongoing commitment to work with different partners and agencies for the benefit of all in society through socially-just education research that is outward facing and that benefits communities, institutions and wider post-pandemic society. They also underpin the Unit's commitment to working with schools to develop their capacity and expertise that will directly impact on children and young people's outcomes, regardless of background. With its focus on socially-just education, the Unit's work is concerned with positive impact beyond the University. In building on progress since REF2014, we have strategies in place to sustain our vibrant research work and realise our ambitions for 2021 and beyond.