

Institution: Lancaster University

Unit of assessment: Education (UOA23)

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

The Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University is an inclusive, dynamic and diverse community of 21 academic staff, four research associates, six professional services staff and 500 postgraduate students. We specialise in conducting theoretically-informed, methodologically rigorous and socially-relevant research in education. This work is based across three research centres: the Centre for Higher Education Research and Evaluation (CHERE); the Centre for Social Justice and Wellbeing in Education (CSJWE); and the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL). Established in 1967, the Department is distinctive in focusing on researching education as opposed to offering professional qualifications in education. We are a pioneer of online postgraduate provision, particularly part-time structured PhD programmes for mid-career educational professionals, having offered online PhD programmes since 2008. Since the first Research Assessment Exercise, the Department has been consistently judged one of the best in the UK. REF2014 placed us in the top six research-intensive education departments in the UK [Source: Times Higher Education Subject Ranking on Intensity]. We have built on this success by increasing the size and diversity of the Department, improving the quality of our research and significantly expanding our community of postgraduate students, evidencing growth beyond expectations. Partly because 90% of our students study online, our research culture is maintained through a variety of online and virtual environments, sustaining a high level of engagement with our students, international collaborators as well as community partners and stakeholders, even during the COVID-19 crisis.

Performance highlights since 2014

Key indicators of Research Performance

	REF2014	REF2021
Number of academic staff FTE	11	18.81
Number of publications during period	452	643
Percentage of publications in Top 10% most cited within the field (SciVal)	18%	22%
Value of competitive grant awards	£1.5 million	£2.6 million
Competitive funding success rate	30%	42%
	223	521
	64	131

Since REF2014, our research strategy has successfully increased our vitality and sustainability by enhancing the quality and reach of our research and the size and diversity of the Department. The FTE academic staff has increased by more than 70% supported by our expanded doctoral provision. We have significantly increased the proportion of early-career and international staff in the Department (see Section 2: People).

We have increased our number of publications by 40% and increased the proportion of publications in the top 10% of cited publications in the field of education [SciVal]. The value of competitive research grants awarded increased by 73% compared with the last REF period and our success rate for these grants increased significantly despite the very competitive funding environment. Our success rate for bids submitted to UK funding councils was 47%, well above the average of 16%¹.

We have significantly increased our PhD student population since REF2014. Both the number of PhD students supervised and completing their PhDs have more than doubled compared to the previous REF period.

Research strategy 2014-20

In achieving our strategy, we have benefitted from stable Departmental leadership, with **Ashwin** acting as Head of Department for the whole assessment period except for a year of sabbatical leave. Membership of the Department's Management Team has included a mix of established staff (**Bligh, Cranmer, Jackson, McArthur, Passey, Warin** and **Trowler**) and new appointments (**Derrick, Earl**, and **Öztok**). This supports the vitality and long-term sustainability of the Department.

The key aims of our 2014-2020 research strategy were: 1) to further develop our three research centres; 2) to increase our PhD student numbers; and 3) to extend international engagement with our research.

1) To further develop our three research centres

Our three research centres drive the Department's research strategy. Our postgraduate programmes are each linked to a research centre, which promotes synergies between our research and teaching.

Centre for Higher Education Research and Evaluation (CHERE)

CHERE is one of the largest and oldest Higher Education (HE) research centres in the world, established in 1967. Members include 11 academic staff (**Ashwin, Bligh, Budd, Derrick, Jackson, Komljenovic, Lacković, McArthur, Saunders, Tight, Trowler**), four visiting professors (Lynn McAlpine, John Taylor, Charles Clarke and Mantz Yorke), and two senior research associates (Rosewell, Greaves). It has 40 associate members including alumni and academic collaborators from universities around the world. In line with our commitment to the development of less experienced staff, this research centre is led by an Early Career Researcher (ECR) team (**Komljenovic** and **Lacković**).

CHERE's research is focused on six key aspects of HE: *Learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum* (e.g. **McArthur's** work on assessment and social justice); *policy and governance* (e.g., **Komljenovic's** work on HE markets); *evaluative cultures* (e.g., **Derrick's** work on the evaluation of research impact); *social practice theories* (e.g., **Trowler's** work on teaching and learning regimes);

¹ UK Research and Innovation Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019, pp136.

student experience and engagement (e.g., **Budd's** work on the student experience); and *evolution of HE research* (e.g., **Tight's** work on international approaches to HE research).

CHERE is a founding partner of the ESRC-funded Centre for Global Higher Education (CGHE) (£4.8 million, income to Lancaster University £610,270 FEC). CGHE is a partnership of 14 international universities focused on researching HE and its future development. **Ashwin** is Deputy Director of CGHE and leads the CGHE project "*Understanding Knowledge and Student Agency*", a longitudinal study exploring how students are transformed through studying chemistry and chemical engineering degrees in the UK, South Africa and USA. **McArthur** and **Komljenovic** contribute to this project, which also supports Rosewell in a full-time, contractual post. A bid to the ESRC for transition funding was successful in early 2020 (£303,478 FEC), extending the Lancaster team to include **Derrick** and her focus on meta-research.

Centre for Social Justice, Wellbeing in Education (CSJWE)

CSJWE is an active network of 15 academic staff (**Afitska, Ashwin, Budd, Connolly, Cin, Cranmer, Earl, Jackson, Lacković, McArthur, Öztok, Passey, Saunders, Trowler, Warin**), two visiting professors (Rosemary Deem, Charles Clarke), two emeriti professors (Hamilton, Rogers), a research associate (Wilkinson) and 22 associate members including alumni and interested researchers from around the world. It is led by **Cin** (an ECR) and **Cranmer**.

CSJWE focuses on questions related to equity, diversity and wellbeing in education, under four main research themes. *Social inequalities in education* (e.g. **Cranmer's** research on educational digital technologies for disabled children); *critical pedagogies for social change* (e.g. **Earl's** research on the pedagogies of protest movements); *relationships and wellbeing in education* (e.g. **Connolly's** work on diversity and inclusion in early years education) and the *theoretical foundations for social justice education* (e.g. **McArthur's** work theorising social justice in education).

Research on education and gender is a key element of the CSJWE's contribution. For example, **Warin** is leading the ESRC funded "*Gender diversification of the early years education workforce (GenderEYE): Recruiting, supporting and retaining male practitioners*" (awarded in 2018, £325,288 FEC), which is investigating why the proportion of men in the UK early years workforce has remained virtually static for 20 years. The project employs Wilkinson as a research associate.

Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL)

CTEL focuses on theoretical and practical challenges related to educational uses of technologies for teaching and learning in formal and informal educational settings. The expertise shared by its members has proved invaluable in aiding the University's shift to online teaching in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Section 4). CTEL has seven members of academic staff (**Bligh, Cranmer, Lacković, Lee, Öztok, Passey, Sime**), an emerita professor (Hamilton), a research associate (Themelis) and 36 associate members including students, alumni and researchers from universities around the world. It is directed by **Bligh** and **Lee** (an ECR).

CTEL's research is organised under three interweaving themes: *Inclusivity in Pedagogy and Learning* (e.g., **Sime's** research on using technology to support inclusive language teaching); *Criticality in Theory and Research* (e.g., **Öztok's** research on becoming a digital scholar); and *Mobility beyond Time and Space* (e.g. **Lee's** research on distance learning students).

Research on using technologies to support educational practitioners and students is central to the work of CTEL. For example, **Sime's** EU-funded project examining Digital Wellbeing (€269,422) supports educators in five countries (Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Ireland and the UK), to develop

pedagogic strategies for teaching and assessing digital competences congruent with digital wellbeing. This project employed Themelis as a research associate.

Synergies between research centres

The Department actively encourages collaboration across the research centres, with most members of staff being members of two centres, as well engaging with other research centres across the university e.g. The Institute for Social Futures. Shared research interests and activities create synergies across the research centres and support the vitality of the Department's research culture in four interconnected ways. First, all three centres draw on social practice theories to explore the relations between policies and practices in educational settings, e.g. **Trowler's** research on Teaching and Learning Regimes. Second, all centres share an interest in the relations between theories and innovative research methodologies. For example, **Bligh's** work on change laboratories and **Tight's** writing on theory and method in HE research. Third, all three centres have a focus on formal and informal teaching and learning practices in a range of institutional settings. For example, **Cranmer's** research on how learning technologies support pupils with disabilities and **McArthur's** work on socially-just assessment. Finally, all three research centres collectively contribute to the Department's International Visitors' week (see Section 3).

Funded research projects often span two research centres. For example, **Jackson's** Swedish Research Council funded three-year project (total £580,000, income to Lancaster £90,500), which examines constructions of masculine learner identities in elite HE contexts in Sweden and England, in collaboration with Swedish colleagues with the involvement of CHERE and CSJW.

2) To expand our PhD student numbers

We host a vibrant PhD student population of both full-time students based at Lancaster and online part-time students based around the world. The large increases in PhD students has extended our international engagement by boosting the number of countries represented in our postgraduate population from 39 in 2014 to 47 in 2020, with particular increases in students from the Gulf Region and South-East Asia. We have developed world-leading expertise in online postgraduate research programmes, which is recognised in our partnership with the University of Rhodes, South Africa, to support a cohort of South African university staff to gain PhDs funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa.

The largest increase in our PhD student numbers has been through our recruitment of part-time students to our four structured PhD doctoral programmes (Educational Research – Higher Education; Education and Social Justice; E-research and Technology Enhanced Learning; and Higher Education Research, Evaluation and Enhancement). These programmes have common elements, based on the PhD in Educational Research – Higher Education that has been running for over 25 years. In Part One (Years 1 and 2), cohorts of 20-30 students study structured modules which support them in producing three publishable pieces of work, as well as introducing them to theories, methodologies and research ethics. In Part Two (Years 3 and 4+), students work with a supervisor to produce a 45,000 word thesis, assessed to the same standards as a traditional PhD. Our students tend to be midcareer educational professionals, studying part time. They consistently report highly valuing the cohort-based design of these programmes and our completion rates are excellent compared to part-time PhD students in other institutions (see Section 2).

3) To extend our international engagement.

Since 2014, the Department has further developed its international partnerships. Departmental staff maintain viable international links with researchers in more than 37 universities in 17 countries

and over a third of our publications are internationally co-authored [SciVal]. The Department's International Director (**Passey**) serves on the Department Management Team and the Faculty's Internationalisation Committee. This commitment to internationality is reflected in the increased international diversity of our staff and student population compared to the last REF period with over a third of our students from outside the EU compared to a quarter in 2014. The Department's Annual International Visitors' Week also supports the development of international partnerships (see Section 3).

Research integrity and ethics

Lancaster University is fully committed to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and is a member of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). The Department adheres to University-wide research integrity and ethics procedures and is committed to conducting research which respects the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants, and minimises risks to participants, researchers, third parties and the University. It follows the ethical guidelines set out in the Lancaster University's Code of Practice and specified by research councils, funding bodies (e.g. ESRC, AHRC) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA).

Ethical research conduct is governed by the Faculty for Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster University Management School (FASS-LUMS) Research Ethics Committee. In 2019, the Department was granted the status of a sub-Research Ethics Committee due to its high research ethical standards, allowing it to self-govern the ethics review for low-risk doctoral research. This allows for timely ethical review and ongoing dialogue regarding ethical research practice between students and staff. All research, including PhD projects, are approved prior to data generation commencing. Applications posing ethical risks are considered by the FASS-LUMS Research Ethics Committee which involves a minimum of two reviewers, or at the monthly meeting of the full Committee. Two members of Departmental staff (**Lacković, Öztok**) sit on the Research Ethics Committee and research ethics is an integral part of Departmental teaching.

Open Access

The Department is committed to Open Access. The publications of all staff are represented in the large and active institutional repository (Gold or Green access), which also provides access to Open Data. Lancaster's Library plays a key role in preparing policies and infrastructure in anticipation of Plan S. Our academic staff REF OA compliance rate is 100%, although it is slightly lower for the Department as a whole because not all of our students' publications meet the OA criteria. Staff in the Department have published Open Access books (e.g. **Ashwin** - *Higher Education Pathways: South African Undergraduate Education and the Public Good*, published by African Minds) and edit Open Access journals such as Palgrave Communications and MDPI Publications (**Derrick**). Two research centres host working paper series supporting staff and students to openly share their ongoing work. CTCL have recently launched the Open Access journal "[Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning](#)" (editors **Bligh** and **Lee**).

Impact Strategy

Impact is central to the values and ambitions of the Department. Our approach to educational research focuses on working with stakeholders to develop practical solutions to social and educational challenges through theoretical enquiry and the analysis of evidence. Our strategy embraces the serendipitous nature of impact and provides our researchers with infrastructure and support to maximise their potential for impact. We seek to balance informal celebrations and

recognition of impact successes with more formalised mechanisms for reward at the University level, such as promotion.

We have introduced a more structured approach to supporting and promoting impact. **Derrick** uses her expertise on the impact agenda in the role of Research Director and impact is a standing item on Departmental Management Team, Research, and Staff meetings. We have introduced an impact-capture mechanism (The Orange box method²), mentorship for researchers regarding impact and a Department approach to social media (see Section 4). Staff members are strongly encouraged to be involved in expert panels, board membership and undertake wider engagement with business and community bodies in order to deepen affiliations and promote the translation of research evidence into stakeholders' practices (see Section 4).

Our impact strategy has resulted in a number of local, national and international impact successes across policy and educational practices. For example, **Saunders** led the review of the Magenta book for the UK Government's Cross-Departmental Evaluation group, which provides a comprehensive overview of evaluation in government. **Derrick** worked with government bodies in the UK, Australia, Canada, Finland, Spain and Norway on the design of research and impact assessment processes. **Passey** has worked with policy makers and head-teachers in Northern Ireland to improve understanding of how specific educational technologies can be used to support more effective learning and teaching in schools.

Impact case studies

Our case studies illustrate the effectiveness of our impact strategy in developing sustained relationships with educational policymakers and practitioners, which supports our research to challenge and enhance existing policies and practices on a local, national and international scale.

1) *Evaluating and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching in higher education* shows how our research has shaped national policies and institutional approaches aimed at enhancing teaching and learning in HE around the world.

2) *Enhancing gender equality in national and international educational contexts* shows how our research has contributed to changing thinking, guidance, strategies and behaviours relating to gender in educational contexts from early childhood to HE.

Future research strategy 2021-2028

In line with Lancaster University's 2020 Institutional Strategy, and building on our three research centre structure, our priority is to enhance our standing as an internationally excellent hub of educational research. Our strategy is to:

- 1) Enhance the vitality of the Department's research by:
 - *Undertaking world-class research* which breaks new ground theoretically and methodologically, addresses urgent national and international priorities and extends our global partnerships. We aim to increase our presence in the top 10% of highly cited papers relative to the discipline by 2028 and capitalise on dissemination through academic and non-academic outputs.
 - *Building a stronger culture of engagement* by developing and maintaining close relationships and collaborations with a range of academic and non-academic partners.

² Vertigo Ventures and Digital Science (June, 2016) *Collecting Research Impact Evidence: Best practice guidance for the research community*.

This is supported by two recent engagement-focused positions. In partnership with Eden, we have jointly appointed Robert Barratt as Eden Project North Professor of Education and Engagement to play a lead role in supporting the University achieve a step-change in its civic role through the Morecambe Bay Curriculum. In partnership with Lancaster University's Institute for Social Futures, we have appointed former Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Education, Charles Clarke, as a 0.25 FTE Professor of Education and Engagement to support our work with Eden Project North and extend our partnerships with policy-makers. We aim to increase the number and variety of stakeholders engaged in our research and to intensify their level of engagement by including them as co-investigators on funding bids.

- Continuing to *provide a supportive, stimulating and vibrant environment* for staff and PhD students and further diversify our postgraduate programmes in order to capitalise on the expertise of new staff. We aim to establish two new postgraduate programmes by 2028.

2) Maintain the sustainability of the Department by:

- *Maintaining and enhancing the Department's research-capacity* by (a) recruiting and retaining academic staff with the potential to be world-leading and (b) supporting them to reach their potential. By 2028, we will seek to further increase the diversity of our staff, particularly at senior levels, and reduce the Department's gender pay gap. We will continue to actively support the career development of staff through to senior lecturer and professorial levels, and will grow our academic staff by at least 2.0 FTE.
- *Diversifying our research income streams* by consolidating our success in research council funding and building our levels of contract research and consultancy.
- *Extending our existing commitment to Open Access* to incorporate the principles of Open Science by appointing a member of staff as Open Science Co-ordinator reporting to our Research Committee.

We review our research strategy annually and will measure our success in achieving these aims using annual reviews of the Department's performance on a range of input, process, and outcome measures and external benchmarks of research quality including future REFs and assessment exercises (e.g. the Knowledge Excellence Framework). Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, our academic community has remained active and resilient and we are confident that these targets are achievable supported by our expertise in online educational and research practices.

Section 2. People

Staff recruitment strategy

We recruit inspiring academic staff with promising or established track-records in one or more of our three core research areas. All Category A staff have indefinite contracts. During the REF period, we have invested significantly in academic staff, having increased our academic staff FTE from 11 to 18.81 FTE. With new appointments, our strategy has been to recruit early-career researchers who show the potential to become internationally-leading and to provide a supportive environment where they can achieve their potential. We have made 11 appointments at lecturer level since 2014, nine have been ECRs (**Dempster, Lacković, Öztok** in 2014; **Lee** in 2015, **Derrick** in 2016, **Komljenovic, Cin** in 2017; **Budd, Earl** in 2019). **Finn** and **Ingram** were appointed to the Department in 2016 and moved on to promotions at other universities in 2019 and

Dempster passed away in 2017. Two professors have retired during the REF period (Hamilton, Rogers).

Our success in exceeding our research goals from 2014 demonstrates the effectiveness of our recruitment strategy, which has laid a strong foundation for our performance into the next REF period, as we mentor our existing staff towards professorial level.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Promoting EDI is central to our educational provision, research agendas and departmental culture. The Department is leading the development of policies and practices to promote EDI through the Faculty's Associate Dean for EDI (**Jackson**), the University Dean for EDI (Houghton), and the co-ordination of Decolonising Lancaster (**Budd**). The Department's Athena SWAN Bronze award application will be submitted in May 2021. The University is a member of the Government's Disability Confident Scheme, the Stonewall Global Diversity Champions programme for LGBT equality and is working towards joining the Race Equality Charter in April 2021.

Since 2014, the Department has become more diverse in terms of academic staff and students. Two thirds of our academic staff are female and a third are from outside the UK compared to the HESA benchmark for Education of 60% and 13% respectively. In addition, 14% of our academic staff have declared disabilities compared to the sector benchmark of 4%. We are less diverse in terms of BAME staff, with 5% (1 FTE) of our staff from minority ethnic backgrounds compared to 15% across the HE sector. This is an improvement in our situation in REF2014, when none of our academic staff were from BAME backgrounds. We will address this in future appointments, through greater diversity on appointment panels, carefully considered advertising and ensuring all panel members complete the University's un-conscious bias training in which chairs are always trained.

Two thirds of our new academic appointments in this REF period were women. All appointment panels include at least one woman and an external member to ensure fair practice. We still have a large gender pay gap (44%), which we will address through recruitment, retention and promotion of female academic staff.

We encourage staff to seek promotion. Opportunities for, and strategies towards, promotion are discussed as part of the yearly PDR conversations between staff members and the HoD (**Ashwin**). Since 2014, we have had 14 promotions (12 female) within the Department, including three staff to Senior Lecturer, one to Reader, and one to Professor (all female). As a result, a significant proportion of women, and non-UK staff have been promoted to senior academic and leadership positions within the Department.

Our REF processes are inclusive and transparent. For REF 2021, staff selection was based on Lancaster University's approved Code of Practice and we monitored our outputs profile in the light of equality considerations. Our REF 2021 Committee (**Ashwin, Derrick, Jackson**) was 66% female and 33% international.

Commitment to staff wellbeing

We actively use University systems to support staff and are supportive of those who wish to move to part-time or flexible working. During the REF period, three members of academic staff have requested, and been supported, to move from full-time to part-time contracts and all have been included in our REF submission. Similarly, we offered greater flexibility in working conditions as well as focused support and career mentoring to staff with increased health, and/or caring responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on career trajectories over time, particularly those with caring responsibilities. In supporting

staff, we draw on Lancaster University's policy on flexible working, as well as those relating to parental and adoption leave.

Commitment to Staff Development

We nurture and support all staff and have clear structures to support the development of staff's teaching and research expertise. A Management Team role focuses on staff development (**Warin**), organising termly staff development workshops on teaching, leadership and research. All staff participate in an annual Performance and Development Review (PDR), which identifies areas for development and how this can be supported by the Department. In addition, every member of academic staff meets annually with the Head of Department and Research Director to discuss their publications, planned research bids and projects, impact activities and any support required. All academic staff receive an annual personal research allowance of £1,000 and additional funds are available at the Faculty level to support further research plans and agendas (see Section 3).

To support the sustainability and vitality of our research and to promote equity, our workload allocation model enables all academic staff to spend at least one-third of their time on research activities. This has been in place throughout the REF period and will continue into the next. This model is used to allocate roles in the Department and, importantly, to redistribute responsibilities where workloads are uneven. Staff are entitled to apply for one term of sabbatical leave after every seven terms. Since 2014, 12 staff have taken a total of 30 terms of sabbatical leave, enabling them to engage in projects that have resulted in 15 books, 30 journal articles and seven successful funding bids. For example, **Trowler** was supported to undertake the work on his monograph '*Accomplishing Change in Teaching and Learning Regimes*', which brings together over a decade of his work and **Warin** to write her successful ESRC-funded bid "*Gender diversification of the early years education workforce: Recruiting, supporting and retaining male practitioners*".

Commitment to ECRs

The Department maintains a commitment to the mentorship and career development of ECRs above and beyond the expectations set out in the ECR concordat. Our postdoctoral researchers (Rosewell, Greaves, Themelis, Wilkinson) are full members of the Department and participate in Departmental events and meetings. They have annual PDRs and are supported in developing their careers. **Komljenovic** was appointed as a Senior Research Associate in 2016 and successfully applied for a Lecturer post in the Department in 2017.

The Department has an excellent track-record of appointing and supporting ECRs in academic posts. ECRs are heavily involved in the co-directorship of our research centres, providing these staff with opportunities to develop academic leadership and management skills. ECRs work with a senior member of the Department who provides mentoring support that frequently continues beyond their probationary period. Probationary staff have a reduced teaching and administrative load (0.75) and are supported to bid for research funding during their probation. They are provided with one-on-one support from the Head of Department (HoD) and Research Director to develop and submit funding bids and are able to apply for ring-fenced research funding from both the Department and the Faculty. This strategy has been successful - more than 70% of our ECRs have been awarded external research funds including from the AHRC (**Cin**), ESRC (**Komljenovic**), EU (**Lacković, Öztok**), and Wellcome Trust (**Derrick**).

Commitment to Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs)

We have surpassed our growth targets for PGRs in the Department, supervising 521 PhD students during the REF period. HESA figures show that our PGR per academic FTE is the second highest

in the UK for education. We effectively support this number of students due to the structure of our PhD doctoral programmes (described above).

Our PhD student body is diverse. Over 90% of our PhD students study part-time and over a third of our students are from outside the UK, based in 47 different countries. Our PhD students are 60% female, with 35% from BAME backgrounds. Over half have parents without experience of studying in HE and 6% have declared disabilities. Our non-completion rates are very low for both the discipline and the sector at 0% full-time students and 23% for part-time students. During the REF period, 131 students completed their PhD compared to 64 in the last REF period, which reflects our success at supporting students to completion.

Three quarters of student tuition fees are self-funded. As many students on our doctoral programmes are staff at other universities, 10% of tuition fees are funded by other UK universities and 6% by universities outside the UK. Students (6%) are also funded by other Departments in Lancaster and by studentships offered by the Faculty. During the REF period, 15 studentships were funded by the Faculty with an average value of £4,600. Overseas governments fund 2% of our students' tuition fees. During this REF period, funding from Research Councils covered 0.5% of tuition fees. This is lower than the last REF period and reflects the change from quota awards to open competition through the North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership.

To support the vitality and sustainability of our PGR community, all PGRs are associate members of at least one Research Centre and have the opportunity to be involved in funded projects. PGRs have regular supervision and annual appraisals to monitor their progress towards completion. Full-time PGRs have office space, Wi-Fi access, photocopying, and printing provision, can apply for QR funded travel bursaries and can take on the role of a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Staff research the PhD student experience and have produced publications to support PhD study and success (**Jackson, Lee, Öztok, Trowler**), which are well-used globally. For example, **Trowler's [personal website for PhD students](#)** had over 7000 separate users [Source: Xerte Toolkits Project Details] during the REF period. The Faculty Research Student Training Programme provides training in research methods, philosophical issues, ethics, data analysis, writing, presentation skills and careers advice. We enhance our research culture for PGRs through our Research Students' Tutor (**Bligh**) who runs twice monthly group meetings with students. These include guest sessions from academics within and outside the Department. There is an annual work-in-progress conference in which all Traditional Route Research (TRR) students present their work to their peers, academic staff and international researchers as an integral part of our International Visitors' Week (see Section 3). A reading group and a writing group meet twice a term, both of which can be joined online. PGRs participate in our research seminars as both presenters and participants. All PGR students are members of Graduate College, which provides a space to meet virtually or in person with postgraduate students from across the University.

We offer a lively, and interactive research environment for our students studying online.

Departmental and Research Centre seminars are livestreamed and recorded, a video of which is available on the [Department's YouTube channel](#) (400 subscribers, over 20,000 views). On average, we have around 30 events of this kind a year. The research centres offer online activities specifically for PhD students, including workshops on various topics, a [working paper series](#), and reading groups.

Part 1 of the structured doctoral programmes involves students researching and writing publishable articles. This strategy has resulted in over 100 articles published in academic journals by our

students since 2014, including articles in leading international journals such as ‘Disability and Society; ‘Higher Education, and ‘Educational Action Research’.

We consistently receive feedback from our students and staff that we are an inclusive, people-focused and welcoming Department. For example, our staff frequently receive student-led awards for their teaching (within this REF period Houghton, **McArthur** and **Warin**) and in the 2018 staff survey, more than 90% of staff felt valued by the Department.

Section 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income

Since 2014, the Department has been extremely successful in gaining external funding (£2.6million competitively awarded funding) despite an increasingly competitive environment, with a 73% increase in the amount awarded and a 68% increase in our research income compared to the last REF period (Figure 1). We have increased the annual average number of grants submitted from 15 in 2014 to 23 in 2020 whilst increasing our overall success rate from 30% to 42%. Our research funding includes both large prestigious awards (for example our contribution to the ESRC Research Centre *The Centre for Global Higher Education*) and smaller, focused grants with an interdisciplinary, pilot-project perspective (for example **Cin** AHRC/GCRF project “*Contextualising Peace Education*” (£5,530 FEC). Funders have included the AHRC (**Cin**), ESRC (**Ashwin, Connolly, Derrick, Komljenovic, Warin**), the European Commission and EU (**Öztoğ, Passey, Sime**), the Swedish Research Council (**Jackson**), and the Wellcome Trust (**Derrick**).

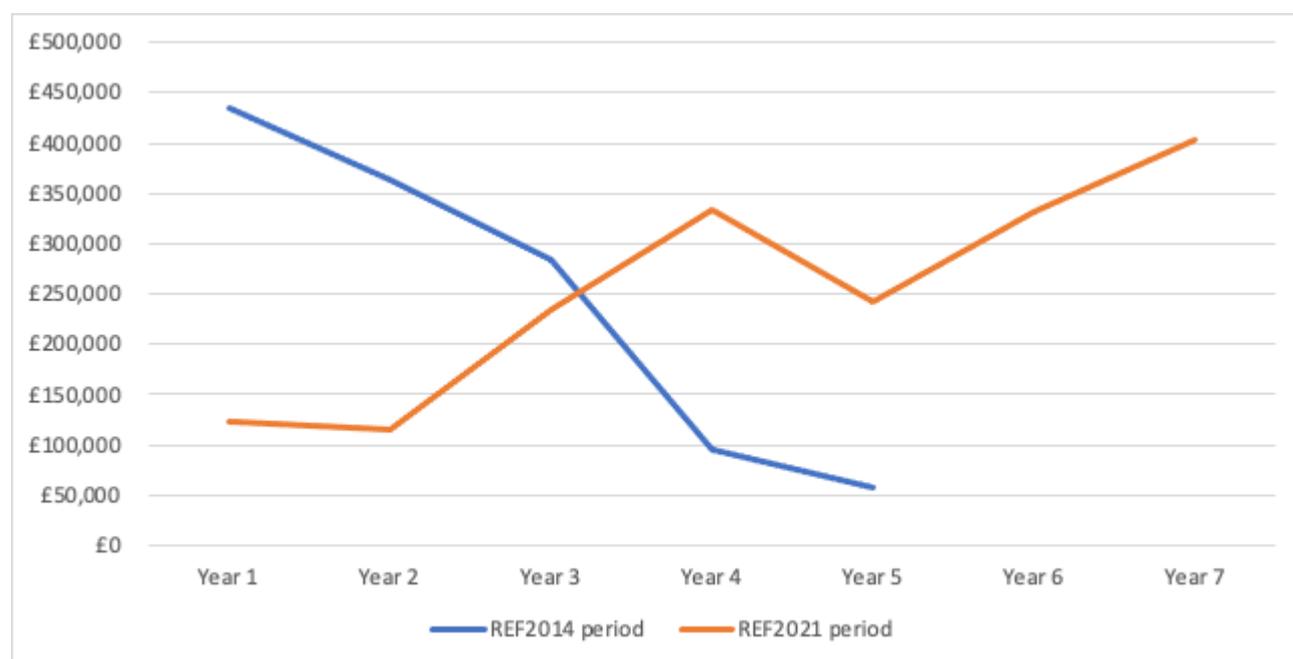


Figure 1: Value of grants awarded by year

Our income from contract research has increased by more than four times compared to the last REF period. For example, **Derrick’s** project “*Calculating the consequences of first failure: Towards creating a peer review system that treats failure as a learning tool*” (£404,863 FEC): was co-produced with the Wellcome Trust and will increase the project’s potential for academic excellence and societal impact.

Academic staff are supported to apply for research funding as outlined in Section 2. The Faculty Research Fund provides support for pilot projects with additional funds provided from the Department to further support this research. In the REF period, 16 pilot projects have been supported, receiving £30,000 in funding (£26,700 from the Faculty and £3,400 from the Department). For example, **Komljenovic** successfully received funding from the Faculty Research Fund in 2018 which supported her to develop a grant application and was awarded an ESRC New Investigators Grant in 2020 (£298,913 FEC).

Organisational Infrastructure

Research Committees at Departmental, Faculty and University ensure the governance, monitoring and sustainability of all aspects of research in the Department. The Department Research Committee, chaired by the Director of Research (**Derrick**) meets termly, developing research strategy targets, disseminating information and coordinating bids for funding. Research performance is monitored at Departmental and Faculty level. The Faculty and the University offer grant-writing workshops, and the Department has a bank of successful grant applications available to consult. The University's Research Services Office offers support relating to research activities involving externally-funded research grants, including pre-award development, post-award support and contracts for research.

Engagement and impact are sustained and enhanced by the following infrastructure:

- (i) Lancaster University's overall impact strategy, encourages co-design, co-production and co-delivery of research with stakeholders; recognises and rewards impact activity within University processes including promotions and workload allocation and provides professional advice and support for impact activities and impact-oriented grant applications.
- (ii) Faculty funds supplement University funds to support impact activity in departments, totalling c.£20,000 per Department annually since 2016. In 2019, the University won an ESRC Impact Accelerator Account (c. £1 million, 2019-23), to which academic staff in the Department have successfully applied. Since 2013, FASS has appointed an Impact Development Manager, Impact Support Officer and Engagement and Partnership Manager, who provide expert advice and help to build, capture, track and monitor our impact, as does the FASS press team. The Faculty also offers an on-going programme of Knowledge Exchange activities for PGRs and academics. Examples include workshops on research network building and planning for knowledge exchange.
- (iii) Departmental strategy for supporting impact (see Section 1).

Estates and facilities

All Department academic staff have individual offices and up-to-date networked IT equipment. Information Systems Services includes a Faculty IT team that provides round-the-clock support. Lancaster University Library holds over 40,000 items in education, plus 24,000 e-books that are relevant to our students, the majority of whom are located overseas. Over 1,400 e-journal subscriptions are in education, as well as all major databases including eight which specifically focus on education.

The Department employs six Professional Services support staff. A professional staff member supports each doctoral programme and Research Centre and administrative support is provided for research contract grants. A full-time online Learning Support Officer (Marsden), supports the provision of a virtual learning environment for postgraduate students, and ensures that events are accessible and inclusive to students online utilising technologies such as VScene and Zoom (video-conferencing), Moodle (virtual learning environment), and Open Learning sites (virtual

collaboration platform for students and staff). This extends our supportive research culture to our online students internationally.

Since 2015, the Department has funded (£5,000 per annum) an annual International Visitors' Week. This supports three leading international researchers (one per centre) to visit the Department for a week to work with students and colleagues. They act as keynote speakers at a one-day conference, attend and provide feedback at the PhD students' annual work-in-progress conference, and join research discussion forums with PhD students and staff. All events are accessible online.

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

Supporting collaboration and engagement

Extensive local, national and international collaboration and engagement are an integral part of our research strategy. The University is a signatory to the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research and has a dedicated Communications and Marketing Department, which offers support for research communication and engagement. PVC for Engagement (Black) leads on the Knowledge Exchange Framework and the Civic University's Agreement.

The Engagement Coordinator (**Lacković**) oversees the Departmental strategy to build and nurture a strong, inclusive and collaborative engagement culture, encompassing all academic members of staff and postgraduate students. Activities include collaborative research and contract research, business and community services (e.g. consultancies), and social and community engagement (e.g. public lectures, exhibitions). The Faculty Engagement Committee brings together Departments and key stakeholders to shape a strategic approach to engagement. Staff are encouraged and supported to include engagement as an integral part of their research programme. For example, **Cin** was encouraged to write for Research Professional News on decolonising research. The Department's International Director (**Passey**) facilitates international research links, student and staff mobility, and overseas visitors, and is supported by a Faculty level committee as well as the PVC Global (Guy).

Evidence of collaboration and engagement

The Department has a wide range of collaborative research partnerships in the UK and internationally. For example, in the UK, **Lacković** worked on projects examining how graphical narratives and memoirs can support student mental health (with the University of Liverpool) and the social connectedness of local residents (with King's College, London). In Europe, **Derrick** is part of the €68 million 2016-2020 European Network for the Evaluation of Social Sciences and Humanities, which supports her collaborative work on peer review and open science. **Ashwin's** ESRC Funded Pathways to Personal and Public Good project involved bringing together HE researchers from 18 universities (eight South African, six UK, Brazil, Finland, Oman and Senegal). **Warin's** 'Men's Career trajectories in and out of early childhood education' involved 17 researchers across 12 countries. Of the 472 publications indexed on SciVal in Education over a third (37%) involved international collaboration and over a fifth national collaborations (23%).

The Department is actively involved in collaborations within Lancaster University. Two members of the Department (**Lacković, Öztok**) are fellows of the University's Institute for Social Futures which works innovatively across disciplinary boundaries linking science, social science and humanities. **Lacković** is co-Director of The GNC ReOPeN network, a national, interdisciplinary research-

pedagogy-engagement network bringing together scholars with a shared interest in comics, graphic narratives, and illustration.

In addition to our visiting and honorary professors outlined in Section 2, we have hosted 37 academic visitors since 2014 from 20 different countries in Africa, Australasia, Europe, North America, South East Asia. Contributors to our International Visitors Week include Professor Melinda Bandalaria (University of the Philippines Open University) and Professor Anna Kosmutzky (Leibniz Universität, Germany), which led to letters of intent to develop future research collaborations being signed by the Department and their institutions.

Each research centre has international associate members. CHERE's 40 associate members include Dr Kean Birch (York University, Canada) and Dr Mimi Urbanc (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts). CSJWE's 22 associate members include Dr Vina Adriany (Universitas Pendidikan, Indonesia) and Dr Paul Sherman (University of Guelph-Humber, Toronto, Canada). CTCL's 36 associate members include Professor Claire Brett (University of Toronto, Canada) and Dr Alberto Ramirez-Martinell (Universidad Veracruzana, México).

Departmental staff have held 12 visiting academic appointments at other universities including at the University of Technology Sydney (**Cranmer**) and Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Madrid, Spain) (**Derrick**).

Engagement with research users

Our engagement strategy prioritises sustained partnerships with local, national and international research users in order to ensure that our research can impact on real world problems. For example, during this REF period, **Ashwin** chaired the International Expert Panel Interim Evaluation of the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NOKUT) Centres for Excellence in Education (SFU) (Jan-Dec 2017). **Connolly** was a Member of the Expert Review Group, UK Prevention Research Partnership (UKPRP) (2017-2019); **Cranmer** served on the UK Council for Children's Internet Safety (2012-2017). **Derrick** was an Expert Advisor Research England, Future of Research Assessment (2018-2019), an Expert Panel member for the Australian Research Council (ARC) Review of the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) and the Engagement and Impact Assessment in Australia (2019-2021). **Jackson** was the National Expert for UK (2016-17) Gender-related challenges in European education systems for the EU.

Komljenovic is a Council Member of the Magna Charta Universitatum and a member of the Appeals Committee of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Warin was a member of the Department for Education Gender Diversification of the Early Years Workforce Task and Finish Group (2017-2018). **Sime** acts as an advisor to EIT Digital, a pan-European digital innovation education organisation (2017-2021).

Contributions to the economy and society

The outcomes of our research are available in a variety of forms suitable for different users. We develop educational resources to support educational practitioners, contribute to public debate, and provide events and resources for the local community as well as for established and developing educational researchers.

The Department actively seeks to make the products of its research accessible to educational practitioners as demonstrated in our Impact Case Studies. A further example is offered by the work of **Sime** who co-developed open educational resources through a series of EU funded projects. This included a MOOC to support vocational trainers, teachers and HE staff in developing visual teaching strategies, and resources to support digital wellbeing amongst students and language

learning by dyslexic learners. Over 25,000 individuals from more than 20 countries have engaged with these resources.

We encourage engaging with the media to share our expertise with wider society and to contribute to public debate. **Derrick** is F1000 Gateway Advisor for Science of Science Policy and Editor of the Political Science blog for the professional magazines Research Fortnight and Research Europe.

Ashwin has achieved a significant amount of media attention for his work on the quality of university education since 2014 (total reach over 9 million [Source: Kantar]) contributing to media outlets including The Guardian, The Telegraph and Times Higher Education. **Warin** (overall reach 303,078 [Source: Kantar]) has achieved significant coverage for her ESRC-funded GenderEYE project appearing in national outlets (The Guardian), professional media (Nursery World), and local newspapers (The Lancashire Evening Post).

We seek to make the outcomes of our research accessible to the local community. For example, in 2019, **Lacković** ran two events at the Storey Institute in Lancaster on learning about history and literature through comics which attracted more than 100 attendees. Through the ESRC Impact Accelerator Account, in 2019 **Cin** ran a 'In pursuit of Peace, Hope and Future' event at Lancaster Museum, that shared photographs taken by displaced youth in South Africa, Turkey and Uganda.

Our research centres offer opportunities for engagement and impact for anyone interested in educational research. CHERE hosts a [Higher Education Research podcast series](#), which features the research of students and staff in the centre. CSJWE are very active on social media with over 700 members of its Facebook group and over 700 followers on Twitter. CTEL has a [YouTube channel](#), offering a wider audience access to discussion of issues in Technology Enhanced Learning. At a Departmental level, our [in-house blog](#) supports staff and students to promote their research and research activities to non-academic audiences. We have a collective approach to engaging with Twitter for the promotion and wider dissemination of individual research profiles, and project hashtags. We have expanded social media presence, with 90% of staff active on Twitter compared to 50% in the last REF period.

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, the Department utilised its extensive academic and practical expertise in the provision and delivery of online postgraduate teaching programmes to provide online advice and guidance for other universities who were struggling with the transition to online teaching. **Lee** led these discussions with an opinion piece in The Conversation (over 40,000 reads) and a follow-up interview in Nature in early 2020. **Trowler** and **Lee** then collaborated on a video blog providing support for online teaching [via a Video blog](#) (500 distinct users a month). **Lee** led Lancaster's programme to support academic staff who were teaching online for the first time (totalling 323 enrolments of the 'How to Teach' Course, and 280 viewers of the course design summary video).

Contribution to and recognition by the research base

Staff are encouraged and supported by the Department to make a sustained and significant contribution to the education research community nationally and internationally. They have acted as referees for over 80 journals and 10 academic presses, predominantly with highly respected publishers such as Oxford University Press, Taylor and Francis, Sage and Elsevier. They serve as Editors or Contributing Editors on seven journals and as members of editorial boards for 18 academic journals. **Ashwin** is a Coordinating Editor of *Higher Education*. **Connolly** is Joint Editor, Journal of Early Childhood Research. **Derrick** is Editor-in-Chief for the Open Access journal *Publications*, Section Editor for Research Policy at *PLoSOne*. **McArthur** is Editor of *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*. **Tight** is Editor of *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher*

Education; International Perspectives on Higher Education Research; Theory and Method in Higher Education Research. Staff have edited or co-edited seven special editions of academic journals since 2014. These have included special issues of *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* (**Earl**) *Globalisation, Societies and Education* (**Komljenovic**) *Journal of Gender Studies* (**Jackson**) and *Social Inclusion* (**Passey**).

Our staff have examined over 70 doctorates at more than 30 universities during the REF period, a third of which were outside the UK. Five staff are members of the ESRC peer review college and colleagues have participated in the peer review of over 15 grant programmes in on the UK, EU and beyond, including North America (NSF), South Africa (NRF) the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong. **Connolly** chaired the Global Challenge Research Fund) Global Engagement Networks Funding Panel (part of the UKRI GCRF Collective Programme) (2019).

Our research centres make an important contribution to the research base through their activities and events. CHERE runs joint events with CGHE, for example the Key Debates in Higher Education Series, which included a joint conference with Universities UK in 2018 aimed at developing a 10-year roadmap for the Teaching Excellence Framework. CSJWE has an ongoing research seminar programme which has included talks from Dr Hilary Cremin, University of Cambridge: 'Building Global Peace and Sustainability: The role of schools' (June, 2019), and Dr Mikateko Mathebula, University of the Free State, South Africa: 'Enhancing low-income South African students' narrative capability and the capability for epistemic contribution through photovoice.' (September, 2019). CTEL is also active in hosting a regular 'Meet & Eat' lunchtime event which attracts external scholars to Lancaster to discuss their recent research in the field. We have organised over 50 conferences and symposia, including major international events such as: *Higher Education Close-Up* and the *Network Learning Conference*.

The intellectual contribution of Lancaster's staff is recognised through significant international keynotes, and numerous academic awards and acknowledgements. Since 2014, staff have given more than 150 keynote lectures at major conferences in over 30 countries. Notable awards have been made to members of staff, for example, **Passey** was awarded the International Federation for Information Processing Outstanding Service Award and **Connolly** is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.