

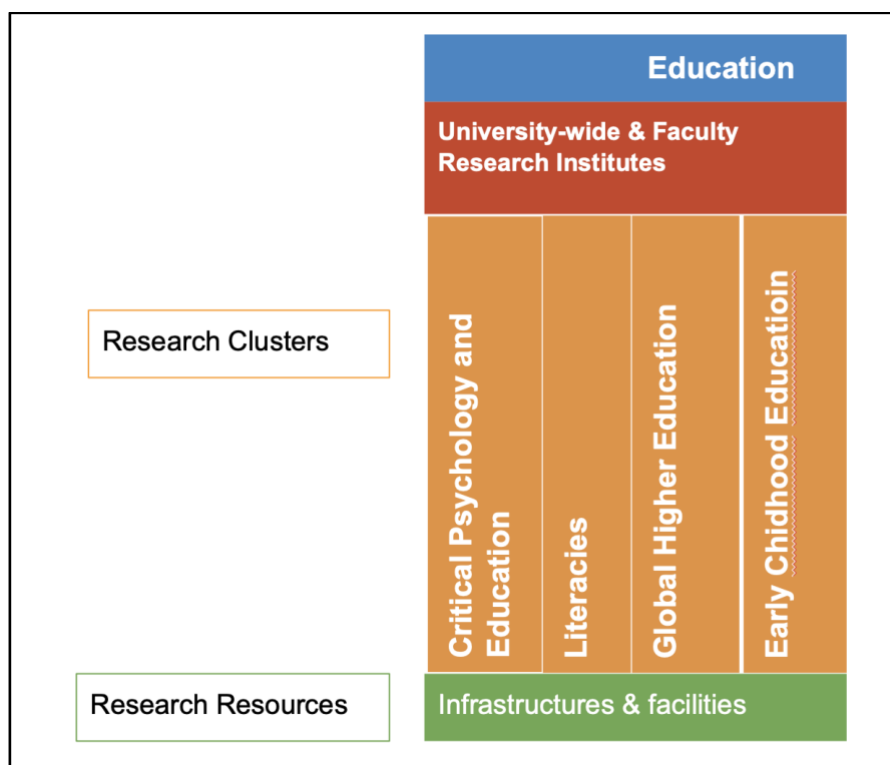
<b>Institution:</b> University of Sheffield
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C-23 Education
<b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b>

### 1.1 Overview

The unit comprises the School of Education in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield. Our mission is to conduct excellent educational research with subsequent impact on theory, practice, society and individuals' lives. Our aim is to be a leader of interdisciplinary research, working across boundaries within and beyond the University. This ambition is contextualised through a research strategy that provides focus within this breadth. Conceptualising education broadly, within and beyond formal settings, and drawing on our expertise will allow us collectively to address educational and societal grand challenges.

The School consists of 27.7 FTE staff, seven of whom are professors, one reader, six senior lecturers (SL), one senior research fellow (SRF), one Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellow (VCRF) and 13 lecturers or early career researchers (ECRs).

Our research is organised into four research clusters, and building on our existing expertise in early childhood, literacies, critical disability studies and education policy, we also have new areas of excellence in developmental, and community psychology, mental health, and multilingualism. The clusters provide interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and inter-agency synergies, enable agile responses to a changing external research environment, and provide support for researchers at all career stages. We have also benefited from the Faculty's investment in the research institute iHuman, which has supported the development of interdisciplinary research.



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This research infrastructure has been accompanied by targeted strategic investment in people (see *section 2*), which has realised our REF2014 objectives. This includes eight ECRs (all of whom are women) recruited since 2014, representing over 28% of staff in this submission, and creating a pipeline of outstanding future talent within a collegial research environment.

Our investment in infrastructure and people has enabled further success, as evidenced in increased grant income, high-quality outputs, and involvement in collaborative and community projects to broaden public engagement, reach and impact. Our research income is £2.9m, with £1.6m from UKRI, which represents a 140% increase since REF2014. We have written >170 publications in leading international journals, e.g.: *British Educational Research Journal*; *British Journal of Sociology of Education*; *Developmental Psychology*, 20% of which are co-authored with international collaborators. The reach and impact of our research is evidenced by our submitted case studies and by broader impacts from work across the School, with examples including the creation of a multilingual library in Sheffield; improving language learning and education apps for business; and improving the training of and access to job coaches for people with learning disabilities in Malaysia.

We aim to build on our investment in staff to further strengthen our research priorities. This strategy aligns with major University £10m investment in four new *flagship research institutes*, providing an excellent foundation for continued future success.

### 1.2 Research outcomes

Each cluster comprises members across academic career stages, from professors to ECRs, enabling creative interaction, excellent mutual support and mentoring. Shared dissemination and training activities (including PGR students) promote best practice in research, grant writing, doctoral training and public engagement and impact, as well as inspiring joint research projects. Many colleagues work in interdisciplinary collaborations across these formal groupings, thereby generating theoretical and methodological innovations.

- **Critical Psychology and Education Research Cluster:** ten core academics with a focus on 'education' broadly, from informal and community-based settings and grassroots programmes to traditional institutions and formal curricula. The cluster is distinctive in its critical approach to studying education, psychology, educational psychology, disability, and mental health. Exemplars of research excellence and impact include key findings on the impact of austerity on the lives of disabled people which have impacted policy and practice in the UK and Malaysia (**Goodley, Prof**); innovative arts-informed, online and co-produced research with disabled young people with life-limiting/life threatening impairments which has informed research and policy strategy of two charities, Canine Partners and Scope (**Profs Goodley, Runswick-Cole and Liddiard, SRF**); **Billington's (Prof)** Healthy Minds research has influenced mental health practice in Sheffield Children's NHS Trust.
- **Early Childhood Education Cluster:** with six core members, this cluster incorporates research that intersects a range of disciplines, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks, and includes children, parents, families, carers, teachers, and the wide range of professionals who work with them. In addition to **Nutbrown's (Prof)** impact case study on early literacy work with families affected by imprisonment, exemplars of research excellence include: **Chesworth's (L)** work, funded by the Froebel Trust, has informed CPD for **early years practitioners** in multilingual contexts; **Pearson's (SL)** work on training needs of early childhood development (ECD) workforce in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) has informed the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's

(FCDO) country guidelines on supporting ECD cadres; **Wood's (Prof)** research on play has influenced early childhood education policy in Jersey and Ireland.

- **Higher Education Research Cluster:** five core members who undertake conceptual, empirical, policy and interdisciplinary research, nationally and internationally. Research excellence is demonstrated by firstly, the success of the cluster in attracting ESRC funding (e.g. ESRC Centre for Global Higher Education on cross-national college and private sectors (G Parry (Prof) 2015-17) and Brexit and higher education (Papatsiba (SL) 2017-19), and collaborating in internationally funded research (e.g. Finnish Academy, European Science Foundation, EU Marie Curie fellowships), and secondly, in external recognition e.g., Ellis (VCRF) was awarded the Kevin Brehony Prize for best first single-authored book in History of Education, 2014; Allen's (L) book *Benign Violence* was Shortlisted for the 2015 British Sociological Association Philip Abrams Memorial Prize.
- **Literacies Cluster:** with seven core members, this cluster conceptualises literacy practices as multimodal and socially situated, as reflected by interdisciplinary research, including material cultural studies, cultural geography, sociology, and the humanities to conceptualise multimodal and multilingual literacy practices in home, community, and education contexts. Research excellence is demonstrated by two impact case studies based on research by **Marsh (Prof)**; **Little's (L)** work has increased the focus on multilingualism in literacy development by the National Literacies Trust. **Bradley's (L)** linguistic landscape-based research in participatory contexts has impacted on practice in community arts, museums and education. **Warmington's (SL)** work has impacted on the development of language learning apps.

### 1.3 Impact strategy

Building on REF2014 when our impact was very highly rated, we have progressed three strategic aims:

- To enable transformative ambitious research that generates new knowledge as the basis of impact on education theory, policy and practice inter/nationally.
- To develop different types of impact (policy; practice; knowledge transfer) at varying scales (local, regional, national and international) and with a wide range of communities.
- To create a pipeline of impact activities at every stage of project development.

We benefit from the expertise of our Faculty Impact Associate, who has provided bespoke disciplinary support to the design, delivery and monitoring of impact activity, complemented by three impact interns (students on 100 hours work placements). We have also secured Impact Accelerator Account (IAA), and HEIF funding of £650k over this assessment period. For example, the Impact Associate worked with **Goodley and Runswick-Cole** to host a policy roundtable which resulted in their collaboration with Youth Employment UK, and led them to developing guidance for 700 employers and for disabled young people; with **Marsh (Prof)**, **Buxton (RA)** and **R. Parry (L)** to access public engagement funding to deliver Makerspaces in local museums and at the Playground Exhibition, which ran alongside the international Children's Media Conference, in 2019. We have provided training and disseminated good practice in projects across our four clusters, thereby extending engagement with research partners, policymakers, and the wider public.

Our three impact case studies, all based on excellent funded research, reflect how we have achieved our three strategic aims with the support of the infrastructure we have put in place. They

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

also demonstrate different types of impact with a range of communities, across local, national and global scales. **Nutbrown (Prof)** has built on the success of her earlier 4\* case study by extending the **Raising Early Literacy Achievement (REAL) approaches** with families in the UK, particularly in disadvantaged communities, and to imprisoned parents, in collaboration with the Prison Advice and Care Trust, The National Children's Bureau and the parent learning charity Peeples. Impact on education, home and community contexts is further exemplified by **Marsh (Prof)** whose research on **improving policy, provision, and practice for children's digital play** has transformed understanding of young children's playful use of technologies. These projects have developed new conceptualisations of literacies and multimodal practices in the digital age, in collaboration with BBC/Cbeebies and YouTube. **Marsh's 'Transforming children's digital literacy practices in formal and non-formal learning spaces'** has identified the nature of children's early literacy development in the digital age in homes, early years settings and schools, with impact on curriculum policies and guidance, and pedagogical approaches. Her interdisciplinary projects on Maker education, in collaboration with **Parry (L)**, **Scott (L)**, **Kay (L)**, **Chesworth, (L)** and **Buxton (RA)**, promote STEAM education for young children through changes in teachers' knowledge and practices. These projects have been conducted at local, national, and international levels, significantly impacting on global education programmes delivered by LEGO, and international education policy.

The international reach and significance of this work is demonstrated by **Marsh's (Prof)** appointment as Chair and Grant-holder of an EU COST (Cooperation with Science and Technology) Action, *The Digital Literacy and Multimodal Practices of Young Children (DigiLitEY)*, a network of researchers from 36 European countries with Australia and Brazil (2014-19).

We recognise that meaningful impact occurs within and beyond any single REF period, and sustained support has resulted in emerging research impact in several new areas. Building on our conceptualisation of education within and beyond formal settings, our future seven-year strategy will develop the impact of collaborative research on multilingualism, literacies and technologies, mental health and well-being, family health and education practices, early childhood education, and improving the lives of disabled people.

### 1.4 Interdisciplinary research

Our clusters focus on individual and collective research strengths, and enable educational researchers to work across disciplinary boundaries, connected by a shared commitment to equality, diversity, and social justice. Our research is interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and inter-agency and draws on the foundational disciplines of educational studies; psychology; sociology; philosophy; history and the arts. During this assessment period, we have concentrated on the development of working groups/research projects in early childhood education; disability; arts/multi-modality; multilingualism; superdiversity; mental health and wellbeing; global higher education; literacies and digital society. Research is informed by innovative theoretical orientations and methodologies with children, young people, families, and other allies in their communities locally, regionally, and internationally.

We have invested significantly in the interdisciplinary iHuman Research Institute (co-directed by **Goodley**) creating a vehicle to bring together staff researching disability, digital literacies, and mental health. Three members of the School are members of the iHuman executive committee and a further ten are core members. A third of staff align themselves with iHuman or another of the Faculty interdisciplinary research institutes such as the Sheffield Institute of International Development (SIID), which is helpful for facilitating the global reach of our research. Engagement with research institutes has led to recent grant capture, with four interdisciplinary projects

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

beginning in 2020-21: **Bradley's (L)** 'XR StoryBox: Multimedia Storytelling' (AHRC); **Buxton's (RA)** 'MakerMove' (Royal Academy of Engineering); **R. Parry's (L)** 'Storyland' (AHRC) and **Olusoga's (L)** 'Play in the Pandemic' (ESRC).

### 1.5 Research integrity and open research

We are committed to supporting a culture that respects the importance of the ethical dimension of educational research and in which all colleagues and PGRs have an appropriate awareness of their obligations under relevant legal and professional frameworks. All research projects led by the School are subject to rigorous peer review by our dedicated Research Ethics Committee, chaired by a senior academic Weighall (R), who is also a member of our Executive and sits on the University Research Governance Sub-Committee. Members undergo University ethics reviewer training and regularly share experiences and discuss emerging issues, such that members develop and deepen their knowledge and experience of conducting ethics reviews. Working with children, young people and marginalised adults raises specific and challenging ethical issues for our researchers so our Ethics Committee works in close collaboration with the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), ensuring that all research carried out by staff and students meets the **highest standards**. Staff and students also meet the requirements of their professional bodies (The British Psychological Society; The British Educational Research Association).

The University facilitates research integrity, providing resources on authorship issues and conflicts of interest as well as an open procedure for whistleblowing (see REF5a). All our PGRs undertake a compulsory research ethics and integrity module, per University policy, and produce a data management plan as part of the confirmation review process (see also REF5a). Maintaining strong integrity underpins our aims to conduct impactful research that will stand the test of replicability.

Feedback on our **good practice** from UREC's recent 2019 review commended the following:

- Allocating time to staff for ethics reviewing in our workload allocation.
- Cultivating experts who advise colleagues on developing age and situation-appropriate information sheets and consent forms, specifically the re-wording of the GDPR in accessible language, and alternative, ways of gaining consent where written consent is inappropriate.
- Comprehensive online resources including ethics case studies and video vignettes.

Our distinctive approaches to co-production have enabled colleagues to develop a range of innovative methodologies which ensure non-academic collaborators inform ongoing assessment of ethical values and processes in our research (e.g. **Hart's (L)** work with the Jamie Oliver Foundation; **Liddiard's (SRF)** work with Canine Partners; **Rosowsky's (SL)** work with faith communities in Sheffield).

To ensure maximum discoverability of our research, we aim to put all outputs in White Rose Research Online, our shared repository with Leeds and York (green route). The 301 outputs deposited over this assessment period were downloaded over 56,000 times. This is our preferred route, ensuring equity in publishing opportunities regardless of available funding; we also publish outputs in fully OA journals, supported by a Faculty fund, or hybrid where required for funder compliance. Altmetrics demonstrate the inter/national reach of publications and their impact: for example, **William's (SUT)** work has informed UK government policy on managing SARS-COV-2 transmission.



## 1.7 Future research strategy

Our future research strategy includes recruiting and retaining motivated and ambitious colleagues; mentoring and support; developing existing and new areas of research, and sustaining reach, engagement and impact. Its effectiveness will be evidenced by increasing the quantity and value of successful grant applications; high-quality research outputs in leading international journals; further diversification of income streams and research collaborations, and sustained impact in a wide range of contexts and communities at national and international levels.

- Our recruitment strategy will be driven by the **principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)** as we replace three professors due to retire, and support research innovation and leadership at all career levels. We will make effective use of our career development structures, annual review and the new Academic Career Pathways (see REF5a), informed by Athena SWAN principles, to further increase diversity amongst staff. We will maintain our distributed leadership model to provide research leadership opportunities at School, Faculty and University levels, and with external organisations.
- We will enhance **mentoring and support for research** through a process of review and monitoring and through the equitable application of probation and mentoring processes, appraisal objectives, and research review meetings with the Research Director and REF Director, to drive up the quality of publications and innovative externally funded research. Staff will be supported to achieve research excellence in a collegial and inclusive culture.
- We will **develop existing strengths** (critical disability studies; literacies; early childhood education policy and practice) **and emerging areas of strength** (developmental and community psychology, mental health, family health practices and multilingualism). We will review the research cluster organisation to support these emerging areas of research excellence.
- We will enable staff to **achieve reach, engagement, and impact** of their research, locally, nationally, and internationally, through external and internal funding schemes, collaborative projects, and develop further productive research partnerships in a range of contexts and communities.
- We will promote EDI in the PGR community through targeted recruitment and by ensuring that PGRs are fully embedded in the research culture of the School through membership of the research clusters and Faculty research institutes.

Taken together, our future strategies will support the development of innovative theoretical and methodological approaches in education, psychology and interdisciplinary collaborations that address globalisation, and educational and technological change supported through University flagship institutes (Neuroscience; Healthy Lifespan) and with Faculty research institutes (iHuman; SIID; Sheffield Robotics).

## 2. People

### 2.1 Staffing strategy and staff development

We pride ourselves on our collegial community, a collaborative work ethic, and a supportive environment where research ambitions can be realised.

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Our strategic aim has been to recruit, retain, develop and reward research staff who will further enhance the diversity of research. We have provided the facilities, resources and mentoring necessary to sustain research excellence and to invest in future growth and sustainability of the School through succession planning supported by our distributed leadership model. We have improved representation of staff with protected characteristics through appointing four minority ethnic staff; one disabled member of staff and 15 women (two professors; one reader; two SLs; one SRF; 10 lecturers) over the assessment period.

- Expertise in **literacies** has been extended by the appointments of **R. Parry**, who is a leader in the emerging field of children's film scholarship; **Scott**, who was awarded the UK Literacy Association Research prize for her PhD in 2020, and engages with sociomaterial theories to understand young children's intra-actions with digital devices and texts, in collaboration with CBeebies, Twinkl, the publishers, and the Lego Foundation; and **Bradley**, who leads a research project, 'Multilingual Streets: Translating and Curating Linguistic Landscapes' (AHRC, 2019-2021) which explores engagement with language diversity in public spaces.
- The **Early Childhood Education** cluster has been strengthened by the appointment of **Pearson (SL)** whose work on the globalisation of early childhood policy and practice is carried out with international development partners; **Kay (L)** whose research theorises the impact of curriculum and assessment policy frameworks on teachers and children, and leadership in England and Australia; **Olusoga (L)**, a historian whose research focuses on play and the discursive construction of children and childhood. **Chesworth's (L)** work on play and pedagogy is informing the sector-led 2021 'Birth to Five Matters' policy guidance in England.
- Expertise in the **Critical Psychology and Education** cluster has been extended by the appointments of **Powell (L)** who uses innovative co-design methodologies in complex interventions for children and young people with neurodisabilities; **Easton (L)**, an applied social psychologist, who researches the use of technology for mental health; **Warmington (SL)** whose research examines the intersection between cognition (i.e. attention, working memory and cognitive flexibility), language and literacy in multi/monolingual individuals across the lifespan; and **Weighall (Reader)**, a cognitive developmental psychologist, researching the relationships between sleep, memory and learning, spoken language development and vocabulary acquisition in children and adults. **Lawthom (Prof and Head of School)** is known internationally for her research leadership in critical and community psychology.
- The appointments of **Liddiard (SRF)**, a sociologist known internationally for her work on intimacy and disability and co-produced research, and **Runswick-Cole (Prof)**, a critical psychologist and leading scholar in disabled children's childhood studies and critical autism studies, have strengthened existing expertise in critical disability studies.
- **Doharty's (L)** appointment brings expertise in the sociology of education, Black history, critical race theories, and critical/anti-racist pedagogies to the cluster.
- **Ellis's** appointment as Vice-Chancellor's Fellow brings expertise in the history of higher education to the **Higher Education** research cluster.

We have encouraged career progression at other institutions and we celebrate the successes of **Mills (L)**, who took up the post of senior lecturer; **Levy (L)** who became associate professor; and **Kontopodis (SL)** who was promoted to professor.

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Succession planning is addressed by the development of future leaders from within the School through mentoring, professional development, and a distributed leadership model; and attracting and appointing exceptional researchers.

### 2.2 Staff support and development

We systematically implement **four approaches to research support and capacity building**:

**Probation:** Probationers/early career appointments are supported by an advisor during the three-year probationary period to meet ambitious targets for grant capture and publications, and to identify training needs. Probationers also engage with our one-to-one mentoring support, Faculty/University research centres and institutes, and Faculty training events on funding applications, impact, and public engagement. They are mentored within funded projects with external research partners, and supported to attend UK and international conferences and seminars. There is a reduced teaching allocation for probationers and all staff preparing new lectures are supported with double preparation time.

**Mentoring:** All staff are mentored by colleagues, as appropriate to career stage and research strengths, and access informal mentoring through research clusters, projects and collaborations. The Director of Mentoring (**Pearson**) is responsible for assuring the quality of the mentor/mentee relationships. Our staff have also participated in the Faculty Future Leaders in HE programme, with the aim of developing capacity in research leadership through increasing knowledge and networks in HE.

**Study leave:** The Workload Allocation Model (WAM) ensures that staff have a balanced workload, and can be flexed to allow additional time for research and impact activities. Study leave enables colleagues to have intensive periods of time (in addition to the standard 40% research allocation) to undertake research and impact-related activities. Staff can apply for a full semester leave or for shorter periods of one to two months. Applications are considered by the School Executive, and include a study plan and report on the outcomes to the Head of School. Study leave has been granted to seven staff during the assessment period. Indicative outcomes include: **R. Parry (L)** submitted two journal articles; and **Winter (SL)** undertook a study trip to Australia and subsequently submitted a successful British Academy small grant. In addition, staff returning from parental leave are supported by access to return-to-work research stimulation funds and the University's Women Academics Returning to Work programme. Staff are also rewarded through the exceptional contribution scheme and are supported for promotion through ACP.

**Resources:** Staff are supported by access to resources:

- a) **Research clusters and interdisciplinary research institutes** provide further support for ECRs and PGRs, enabling them to be full members of the academic research community through in/formal meetings, research seminars, conferences and writing retreats. ECRs engage in activities organised by both Faculty and University research centres where they can develop interdisciplinary collaborations. The Research and Scholarship Committee includes an ECR member on a rota basis, in order to remain transparent, inclusive, and to build research leadership. These strategies ensure that ECRs have opportunities to develop external links, research outputs and build pathways to impact. We design research support for all staff. For example, this year's research development programme was co-designed with iHuman and was inclusive of staff at all career stages.
- b) **Bespoke support for impact** is available to facilitate exchanges between academia and business, industry or public or third sector bodies and charities locally, nationally and



internationally. Our strategy involves ensuring that staff are positively encouraged and supported to undertake impact activity in the following ways:

- impact is conceptualised as an integral part of allocated research time;
- impact objectives are discussed as part of research planning and annual appraisal;
- impact generation activity is reinforced by embedding the principles of ACP in review and mentoring processes.

We benefit from the bespoke support of our Faculty Impact Associate to maximise research impact; for example, supporting **R.Parry** secure an IAA-funded secondment with the National Videogame Museum leading to the development of materials which won the Galleries and Museums Award for innovative use of digital technology in education materials.

- c) **Funding**, which comes from project grants, IAA, and HEIF, enables research clusters to support public engagement and impact activities. Examples include **Billington's (Prof)** sessions on improving children and young people's mental health in schools delivered to key stakeholders from across the Sheffield city region (June 2019). Subsequently, cluster members (**Billington, Prof & Cameron, L**) developed two research projects (with educational psychologists and teachers in the Yorkshire and Humber region) and the results will inform strategic planning in the future training of educational psychologists in children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Membership of research clusters has facilitated exchange between academia and business by raising the profile of researchers through their collaborative networks. For example, this has led to **Warmington's (SL)** work with Babel, the language training software developer, and **Marsh (Prof)** and **Scott (L)** have worked with Twinkl, provider of teacher assessment and planning materials, on app development.

In addition, our **research stimulation fund** supports staff to develop networks and partnerships, and they can use their research time to engage with key stakeholders. For example, **Powell (L)** developed her co-produced research with young people with ADHD. This funding is complemented by pump-priming money for bid preparation from iHuman Research Institute, SIID and Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) leading to the submission of grant applications (e.g. **Chesworth, L; Pearson, SL; Webb, SL**).

In line with our PGR and staff development strategy, all staff are involved in **doctoral supervision**, with a maximum of 6 FTE students. ECRs co-supervise with an experienced member of staff and are supported, through training, to undertake doctoral confirmation reviews and *vivas*.

### 2.3. PGR students

The aim for our graduate school is to prepare our PGRs for a range of careers within and beyond academia. Our reputation for research excellence attracts international applicants, diverse in age and experience who contribute to the research community. There have been 308 doctoral completions during the assessment period (fractional awards show where a student is supervised with another unit).

Year	Professional Doctorates	PhD	Total
2013-14	27.0	6.0	33.0
2014-15	35.5	12.5	48.0
2015-16	27.0	9.0	36.0
2016-17	37.0	13.5	50.5
2017-18	42.0	13.0	55.0
2018-19	27.0	14.5	41.5
2019-20	32.0	12.5	44.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>227.5</b>	<b>81.0</b>	<b>308.5</b>

49% of students are part-time and 76% are women. Currently the proportion who identify as minority ethnic (1%) and disabled (0.5%) is lower than we would like. However, we are addressing this by enhancing our outreach and marketing to ensure our PGR offer is accessible to all. We are also aware that there may be more students within these groups who have not identified as such, therefore we are creating an environment where people feel able to identify more openly.

### ***Studentships***

Our strategy has been to ensure that PGR students are supported by a wide range of funders. We have successfully secured 10 studentships through the ESRC-funded White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership (WRDTP). **Winter (SL)** was the deputy director supporting the 'Education, Childhood and Youth pathway' of the DTP until August 2020, this role is now fulfilled by **Chesworth (L)**. We actively support colleagues to seek studentship funding from other bodies, which has included the development of ESRC collaborative research awards with partners including Conflict Resolution Education in Sheffield Schools Training (CRESST), a local charity; the Development Education Centre South Yorkshire (DECSY); Sheffield City Council, and CBeebies. We also have studentships from the governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Malta.

### ***Training***

Our training and support is designed to ensure that students develop skills to engage in and beyond academia. This support is quality assured through focused discussions with the Faculty PGR Director, taking into account PGR feedback through the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). Our PGRs work with their supervisors on an individually tailored training needs analysis, then participate in the University **Doctoral Development Programme** (see REF5a) to develop their skills and prepare for their **future careers**, including compulsory **research ethics and integrity training** and access to the University's **Think Ahead** training to support career trajectory. The **Sheffield Methods Institute** provides a programme of social science specific training and development throughout the year, focusing on research design, qualitative and quantitative methods. Support for academic and thesis writing, and speaking skills is also available through the University's English Language Teaching Centre. All PGRs must complete a data management plan and participate in student-led research seminars to share their work with peers and staff.

To ensure relevant support and timely progress, PGRs undertake a confirmation review, in the form of a viva voce with two examiners, typically, 9-12 months into their programme of study; this is a key mechanism for maintaining quality assurance, intellectual rigour and preparation for the final viva.

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All PGR students have dedicated academic and pastoral support sessions with supervisors. For EdD students, this is also provided through study school weekends, and DEdCPsy students are also supported by their fieldwork supervisors. Progress is monitored through attendance and progress monitoring checkpoints, and contributes to our strong record of in-time submission rates.

The benefits of our inclusive research culture extends to our PGR, PGT and BA cohorts through research-led teaching and supervision, within a community of experts whose work reflects diverse theoretical and methodological approaches. PGRs are encouraged to join our research clusters, and are supported to publish and present their research, including at our annual Research and Scholarship Day, with the support of established researchers who publish in inter/national contexts, reflecting a range of themes that have inter/national relevance. PGRs are supported by academic colleagues to organise and run seminars and symposia e.g. *New Directions in Critical Disability Studies*, 2020.

We have a transparent and equitable process to enable PGR students to gain experience as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), contributing successfully to our BA and MA programmes. Further bespoke career development is offered via our contribution to the iHuman Career Development Programme addressing UKRI funding, understanding the ACP, and writing for publication. This supports career progression and capacity building.

The excellence of the PGR community is evidenced in two ways:

1. **Awards and prizes:** Three students (Bulman, Parry, Scott) have won the UK Literacy Association Student Research Prize for their PhD theses. Baker was the 2019 winner of the British Journal of Sociology of Education's Annual Best Early Career Article prize for the first publication from her thesis.
2. **Career progression:** Abdi took up a lectureship at Sheffield Hallam University and now works as an independent education consultant; Grech became a lecturer in Mental Health, University of Malta and Mater Dei Hospital; AlWadaani is working with the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to design new national teacher preparation education programs to influence policy and practice, and change attitudes towards disability and disabled children; King (EdD) works for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in Ireland on the revision of curricula in Senior Cycle Sciences. **R. Parry** and **Scott** are both now lecturers in this School.

## 2.4 Supporting and promoting EDI

Our ambition to sustain an inclusive and open research environment is delivered through our EDI strategies. EDI is a key priority, and the EDI lead is a member of our Executive. The Faculty Co-Director of EDI is a member of the School (**Williams, Senior University Tutor**) and plays a key role in leading the EDI agenda in the School and across the Faculty. We actively engage with and contribute to University strategies in relation to race, gender, LGBTQ+ and disability. We are working towards our Bronze Athena SWAN application.

Our commitment to EDI means that all staff can routinely access **flexible** and/or **remote working**. Some staff members have had extended periods of flexible and remote working. For example, four staff with caring responsibilities for older adults have been able to work flexibly and remotely; one member of staff has been supported to work flexibly to care for their adult disabled child, and several members of staff have had adjusted working patterns following a bereavement and there has been support for staff with increased pressures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

All staff members, regardless of contract type or FTE, are supported in their career pathways through the University's **Academic Career Pathway** (see REF5a) and through the School's support mechanisms as detailed above.

Our Research and Scholarship Committee manages a **conference fund** that supports staff and research students to attend inter/national conferences, with applications open throughout the year. We have recently modified the terms of reference for the conference fund to allow staff/PGRs to apply for support with caring responsibilities and/or additional support, such as a personal assistant, for conference attendance.

We endeavour to ensure that research activity is carried out, whenever possible, during Athena SWAN core hours and that training opportunities are also offered during core hours.

We adhere to University policies on **phased and supported return to work** following periods of ill health or leave of absence (staff and PGRs). Long-term illness is managed through reasonable adjustments, informed by HR policies.

We recognise that we have an anticipatory duty to meet the needs of **staff with protected characteristics**. Teaching and seminars are carried out, wherever possible, in accessible buildings. In the next REF period, we will move into new accommodation and EDI issues are at the forefront of planning for the transition. We aim to maximise accessibility and inclusivity in the design to meet and exceed the requirements of the Equality Act (2010). In 2016, we moved buildings after consulting staff and PGRs about the design, facilities and layout, and responding to requests. With an anticipated move to a new building in 2022, co-located with other units within the Faculty, we will continue to work closely with all staff/students to ensure accessibility.

**Staff wellbeing** is supported through formal and informal mentoring, participation in the research clusters and day-to-day interactions in an open plan office environment. The Head of School has 'open-door' availability whenever possible to facilitate informal interactions. Wellbeing is supported by flexible working as detailed above. In response to COVID-19 all staff, including those with leadership roles, are encouraged to prioritise wellbeing in decision-making. Staff can access the University counselling services and wellbeing resources via Juice Sheffield, which have been updated to support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### 3.1 Income

Our mission to address societal and scientific grand challenges is underpinned by sustained increases to our external funding. Over this assessment period our research funding strategy has seen income increase to £2.9m, including £1.6m UKRI funding. This success results from the strategic creation of a research environment that features and supports excellence across all academic career stages, and is the result of our strategic support for researcher development, including mentoring and research infrastructure. We have won 62 grants, with 54% of staff and across all career stages acting as PI. We also strategically targeted funding from UKRI, the British Academy and charitable foundations as part of our strategy to develop a broad portfolio of funders, and to encourage all staff to engage with opportunities relevant to their expertise and career stage and to sustain a pipeline for continued research excellence.

The ESRC is a priority funder for us and their recent priorities for mental health and innovations in social and health care are closely aligned with our strategic ambitions and thematic strengths.

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Examples of successful ESRC applications include: **Goodley (Prof)**, **Liddiard (SRF)** and **Runswick-Cole (Prof)** ; **Marsh (Prof)** ; **Olusoga (L)** ; **Papatsiba (SL)** . **Olusoga, (L)**, the UKRI rapid response COVID-19 call. We plan to ensure that ESRC will be a major funding source for our research agenda in the short and medium term. The AHRC has also been a major source of funding for the School with successful applications by **Pahl (Prof)**; **Wood (Prof)** and **Bradley (L)** (AHRC OWRI Cross Language Dynamics). A further three projects, two led by **R. Parry (L)** and one led by **Bradley (L)**, have also commenced.

In line with our strategic goal to maintain a broad base for research funding, we have attracted support for our research by prestigious funders other than UKRI, including Wellcome and Nuffield and the British Academy. The diversity of our research strengths is also reflected in grants awarded by charitable foundations: **Chesworth (L)** (Froebel Trust); **Liddiard (SRF)** (Wellcome); **Little (L)** (European Education Research Association); **Marsh (Prof)** (Lego Foundation); **Weighall (R)** (Nuffield Foundation).

Additionally, the global ambition, significance and reach of the research is reflected by our success in attracting international funding. **Marsh (Prof)** (European Commission Horizon 2020); **Runswick-Cole (Prof)** (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada); **Scott (L)** Australian Research Council; **Wood (Prof)** (Australian Research Council).

Our staff have received in-kind support from community partners including Sheffield Libraries' space and staff time to facilitate **Little's (L)** 'Multilingual Libraries' project. The National Video Games Museum supported **R.Parry's (L)** research through dissemination and free access to their annual conference. **Bradley (L)** received support from Whitworth Gallery Manchester who provided workshop space for the Multilingual Streets project. **Marsh (Prof)** undertook a project in collaboration with Autodesk to review computer aided design software (Tinkercad) for use in early childhood settings. Autodesk contributed 20 hours of staff time to the project.

## 3.2 Infrastructure and research support

The University and Faculty have made a substantial investment in infrastructure and research support through the Faculty research institutes and four flagship research institutes (REF5a). We have also benefited from support for research development provided at Faculty level. Research support received substantial investment from 2019 via expansion of Faculty Research Services team (1.8 FTE) to a Faculty Research Hub (2.9 FTE; 3.4 FTE from 2020), Faculty Research Growth Team (1.8 FTE), and academic and Faculty support for KE, impact and public engagement was expanded from 1 to 6 FTE. The teams work closely together to provide a co-ordinated service to staff across the Faculty, specifically to provide complementary knowledge and expertise covering the external environment, faculty research strengths and non-academic collaboration. The teams ensure that support is responsive, helpful, scalable, and priority-driven with the focus on adding value through expertise; provides support where it is most impactful (for example, ECRs, complex and non-standard applications, and capacity and community development); responsive to and influential in the academic leads' steer, for example, by providing supporting data, evidence and experience; builds and is integrated across the University and beyond to maximize opportunities.

Research is supported by a psychology technician whose role includes online/crowdsourcing research methods; experimental techniques and wearable technologies (e.g. actiwatches; overnight sleep). There is a designated lab with a high-spec research machine that houses access to a 14-channel mobile EEG (EMOTIV Epoch+), wearable action watches that can log activity,



## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

single-use sleep electrodes for home deployment and standardised psychometric tests (the British Picture Vocabulary Scale, the WAIS/WISC, the YARC, TOWRE-2).

Our Kaltura and Echo360 channels host a range of research-related materials including consent, ethics, data analysis, internet mediated research methodologies and design. Staff and students have access to specialist software to support research activities, with centrally managed secure storage. In addition to our own facilities, staff have made use of shared research infrastructure both in the UK and overseas. For instance, **Runswick-Cole** has used Re\*Storying Autism digital storytelling facilities at the University of Guelph.

As part of our EDI strategy, there is a commitment to supporting staff on temporary contracts in acquiring research funding, e.g. **Goodley (Prof)** supported **Liddiard (SRF)** to secure research funding and she is now a permanent member of staff. All staff are supported through mentoring and with annual one-to-one meetings with the Research Director and REF Director to support medium to long-term research planning.

The change in office environments, in 2017, and move to open plan working has facilitated cross-team collaborations. Our city centre location and new facilities have enabled the research community to capitalise upon our links with local schools and agencies across the city region and inter/nationally. We have excellent access to research resources in the School of Education including a comprehensive library of educational assessments and analysis software, and digital technologies to support research projects.

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

### 4.1 Research engagement

Collaborative research is a key priority for us. Staff engage and develop relationships with research users, beneficiaries, and audiences to ensure sustained collaborations, networks, and partnerships ensuring research impact. We have further developed a vibrant research community and **diverse pathways to engagement, collaboration, and impact during the assessment period**.

We share outputs of research through online resources and public-facing events. We engage with diverse communities and public via a range of events, for example:

- **Seminar series** convened by the research clusters. Examples include: *Young people and mental health: A psychosocial model for education*, (June 2019) included practitioners and researchers from across the University, Sheffield City Council and Sheffield NHS Children's Trust. ECE Research Cluster/iHuman Research Seminar (January 2019).
- A **social media** strategy which includes an active blog "Education Matters" where public engagement and impact activities are shared; and a regularly updated Twitter feed which promotes our work and supports strategic alliances with partners.
- **Public engagement and impact events**. e.g. Pint of Science, ESRC Festival of Social Science (FSS); Festival of the Mind. Examples include **Chesworth (L)**: ESRC Festival of Social Science 2017; 2018; **Liddiard (SRF)**: ESRC FSS, 2017, 2018, 2019; **Little (L)**: ESRC Festival of Social Science, 2018; Pint of Science, 2019; **Goodley (Prof)**, 2015, 2016; **Marsh (Prof)** ESRC FSS: 2017, 2018 and 2019; **Rosowsky (SL)**: Festival of the Mind 2018); **Webb (SL)**: Festival of the Mind, 2018. [Total funding = £35,667]

- **Keynotes and research masterclasses** for local authorities and national organisations e.g, Early Education; National Children's Bureau; Nursery World; Eureka! Children's Museum; Young Dementia UK Research Network; Royal Society for Medicine.

Our strategy has been to accumulate expertise in the research clusters through the appointment of ambitious staff, and by deepening existing and creating new research partnerships. These partnerships have impacted upon policy and practices in industry; education; local, national and international policymakers; and the third sector and wider communities:

- **Industrial impacts:** **Hart's (L)** research informed the work of The **Jamie Oliver Foundation's** healthy school's initiative; **Warmington's (SL)** work with **Babbel**, a language learning app company based in Berlin, has enhanced the efficacy of their app development and engagement of stakeholders. **Marsh (Prof)**, **R. Parry, (L)** and **Scott (L)** have collaborated with the Lego Foundation.
- **Educational impacts:** **Doharty (L)** collaborated with the educational publisher Hodder & Stoughton to revise their **AQA-approved sociology curriculum** drawing on research-informed evidence related to diversity and inclusion; **Papatsiba (SL)** is a member of the ESRC/OfS Centre for Global Higher Education and its Research Management Steering Group;. **Nutbrown (Prof)** has been consulted by the Social Mobility Commission, Early Years Commission and DfE on early education workforce qualifications.
- **Policy impacts:** **G. Parry (Prof)** was appointed to the Department for Education Expert Reference Group for the Review of Education at Level 4 and Level 5 in England. Expert and confidential briefings by **G. Parry** to government departments on higher technical education and **G. Parry's** work was cited in the Augur panel review report on post-18 education and funding (2019) and reports by the Department for Education on its review and consultation about Level 4/5 education. **Runswick- Cole** and **Goodley's (Profs)** collaborative research with the Institute of Public Policy Research North have been used by MPs and journalists. In April 2019 Liberal Democrat MP, Tim Farron, tabled an Early Day Motion citing the report and in July 2019 Laura Smith (MP Crewe and Nantwich) cited the report during a debate on the DfE budget. In 2016 **Wood (Prof)** was commissioned by the States of Jersey Education and Home Affairs department to lead a scrutiny panel on the age of starting school. A subsequent review by the states of Jersey of early years provision (2017) incorporated recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel report for policy and practice in transitions from preschool to school.
- **Impacts on Third Sector:** **Goodley** and **Runswick-Cole (Profs)** organised a policy round table attended by Youth Employment UK (YUEK), the secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary group for youth employment. This resulted in a programme of work in which the team developed resources with YEUK, including a podcast and on-line materials, for their 700 membership organisations to support disabled young people into employment.

Following a joint presentation with Sheffield Children's Library on the Multilingual Children's Library project at the UK Literacy Association (UKLA) conference in 2019, **Little (L)** was invited to convene a new Special Interest Group for UKLA, bringing together academic researchers, teachers, and policy makers to drive forward issues around Literacy and Multilingualism. In July 2020, **Little (L)** ran a staff development session for the entire staff at the National Literacy Trust (NLT), and was subsequently invited to collaborate with the NLT on adapting their annual literacy survey for young people (taken by 58,000 participants in 2019) to increase the focus on multilingualism in literacy development.

## 4.2 Research collaborations

**Research collaborations** are supported through a **conference fund** that enables colleagues to network at inter/national conferences and seminars. For example, **Kay (L)** presented *Re-forming and reforming the Early Years Workforce in England*, at the Australian Association for Research in Education, Sydney, December 2018. **Webb (SL)** presented a paper at the International Conference on Critical Education: On *Teaching to Transgress* in London in July 2018. In addition, **research stimulation funds** are available to pay for travel and subsistence to bring together non/academic stakeholders to co-produce research bids, and ensure findings are shared with non-academic partners. For example, **Webb (SL)** held a workshop with key stakeholders to develop a collaborative project on pedagogies of hope. Many of our projects have webpages to link with stakeholders, detail public engagement events and share findings (for example: [livinglifetothefullest.org](http://livinglifetothefullest.org); [humanactivism.org](http://humanactivism.org); [makekeyproject.eu](http://makekeyproject.eu)).

Collaborations with non-academic partners enable us to respond critically to global discourses in education, in national and local contexts. These collaborations have enriched the research environment, enabling the development of local, regional, and inter/national research. They build on established and emerging areas of expertise: early childhood education; disability; arts/multi-modality; multilingualism; superdiversity; mental health and wellbeing; global higher education; literacies and digital society. Our staff contribute to the **sustainability of the discipline** through interdisciplinary projects, which respond to inter/national priorities and initiatives. This is evidenced in the following ways:

- Staff are regularly asked to be **members of review panels and editorial boards**, selected examples include: **Allen (L)** was a member of PESGB Large Grants committee member (2016-18); **Billington (Prof)** reviews for the ESRC, NIHR and MRC; **Ellis (VCRF)** reviews for the AHRC; **Weighall (R)** reviews for the ESRC, Nuffield and Action Medical Research; NIHR, and Health Technology Assessment. **Wood (Prof)** reviews for the ESRC, AHRC, Research Council of Norway, Research Council of Switzerland, Hong Kong University Research Council; **Ellis (VCRF)** co-edits *History of Education* (2019 onwards); **Marsh (Prof)** is the Founding Editor of the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* (2006 - present). **Nutbrown (Prof)** is founding editor and Editor in Chief of *Journal of Early Childhood Research* (2006-present). **Runswick-Cole (Prof)** is *Voices* Editor for *Community, Work and Family* (2016 - present).
- **Inter/national exchange:** Staff from every career stage are highly sought after as invited speakers and keynotes inter/nationally. For example, **Cameron's (L)** invited talk: 'How do students and educators in higher education talk about learning, learning difference, and 'intelligence'?' at the University of Birmingham (2019); **Weighall (R)** 'Sleep to learn - The importance of sleep in learning and development' at the education and intervention CPD meeting, Royal Society of Medicine (2019); **Goodley (Prof)** 'The interplay of perspectives in disability Studies' in a keynote address to the Third Hungarian Disability Studies Conference, ELTE University (2015).
- Senior staff also hold a number of **visiting roles** including **Billington (Prof)** is visiting professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Malta (2014- present); **Goodley (Prof)** has been visiting professor at the University of South Wales, Ghent and Iceland; **Sikes (Prof)** is honorary professor at the University of Kwazulu Natal, Durban, South Africa (2014 to present); **Wood (Prof)** is visiting professor at the University of Auckland (2016-2021), Australian Catholic University (2016-2021), and Stranmillis University College (2015-2021).

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

- Our staff, at every level, are highly sought after as **doctoral examiners**. Examples include: **Chesworth (L)**: Brunel (2019) and Huddersfield (2017); **Olusoga (L)** Flinders University, Australia (2020); **Rosowsky (SL)**: Lancaster (2015) and Exeter (2018); **Winter (SL)** Institute of Education (2016), and University of Otago, NZ (2019); and **Billington (Prof)**: Tilberg, Netherlands (2016).
- We attract large numbers of requests from **visiting scholars**, applications are accepted where they can make a strong contribution to our research strengths and mission. Over the assessment period, we have hosted **20 visiting scholars** visiting **11 academics** from **20 institutions** in **14 different countries** from every career stage. Examples include Dr LaGarrett King, University of Missouri, Columbia, whose visit enabled **Doharty (L)** to raise the profile of her research inter/nationally; and Dr Tsitsi Chataika, University of Zimbabwe, whose visit to **Goodley (Prof)** resulted in an application to the GCRF.
- **International research collaborations** include **Marsh's (Prof)** as a co-investigator (2020-2025) in the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child, an Au\$34million centre run by Queensland University of Technology; **Runswick-Cole's (Prof)** work as an international collaborator on 'Re\*Storying Autism' (Social Science & Humanities Research Council) has given access to digital storytelling facilities; **Wood (Prof)** has been the international partner investigator on two projects funded by the Australian Research Council with colleagues in Australian Catholic University, and has contributed to research publications, academic seminars and professional conferences.
- All staff are invited to and supported in making **overseas institutional visits**. Examples include **Chesworth (L)** visited the University of the Western Cape and Project for Alternative Education in South Africa (2019) using internal GCRF seed funding to develop research collaboration. **Pearson (SL)** visited the Aga Khan University, Karachi (2019) to share research and visit field sites. **Goodley (Prof)** visited National Institute of Education, Singapore; Deakin University and the University of Malaya (2018-2019).
- **Professional associations and learned societies**. **Ellis (VCRF)** is a member of the executive committee of the History of Education Society (2019-2025), and co-convenor of the BERA History SIG. **Papatsiba (SL)** is a member of the Global Higher Education and Research (GHEAR) Steering Group of Worldwide University Network (WUN). **Billington (Prof)** is a member of the BPS Child Protection Committee. **Nutbrown (Prof)** is President of Early Education. Our research environment also incorporates the **scholarship** of University/Senior University colleagues, whose research is focused on practice (HE pedagogies; doctoral supervision; assessment in HEI) and demonstrates wide dissemination beyond the Unit.
- Staff have been awarded the following **fellowships**: **Allen (L)** was awarded a fellowship from the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) in 2014. **Sikes (Prof)** was awarded the BERA John Nisbet Fellowship for an outstanding contribution to education research over a career.
- Research excellence has also been recognised in the award of **prizes**: **Ellis (VCRF)** was awarded the Kevin Brehony Prize for best first book in *History of Education* 2014: **Little (L)** won the UKLA prize (2019) for her work on multi-lingual libraries.

Our research environment will continue to support the development of world-leading educational research through high-quality appointments, doctoral students, grant capture, infrastructure, and leadership. We are positioned to take forward our mission to conduct excellent research in the

**Unit-level environment template (REF5b)**

context of EDI and social justice. Furthermore, we will continue to contribute to educational debate, policy critique and practice developments across the life course. It is a testament to the strength of the research environment that during the COVID-19 pandemic, our systems and research activities continued to support success in grant capture and high-quality publications.