

Institution: Arts University Bournemouth

1. Context and mission

Wider institutional context

1. Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) is one of the UK's leading specialist institutions with an international reputation in media, film, design, arts and performance. Awarded Gold in 2017 TEF, RIBA Accreditation in 2019, and Outstanding by OFSTED, AUB is a member of Guild HE and a leading player in the specialist higher education sector. Following the appointment in 2019 of Paul Gough as Vice-Chancellor, the university has developed a new five-year strategy with an ambitious research and knowledge exchange plan.
2. There are three academic Schools: Art, Design & Architecture, and Media & Performance (offering a suite of undergraduate courses); the Graduate School was established in 2019 to bring together taught and research postgraduate students. AUB has around 3,100 undergraduate students; 150 postgraduate taught students and 13 postgraduate research students. A significant amount of learning is delivered through short course, CPD and Summer Schools, bringing the total student population to some 4,000 FTE.
3. Having secured Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2008, AUB works in partnership with the University of the Arts, London for the delivery of research degrees (since 2012). In 2016 we celebrated our first doctoral awards and established a pipeline from application through to successful completion for PGR students. The partnership was successfully reviewed in 2016 with approval for a further five years. Our first post-doctoral researcher was recruited in 2020.
4. AUB is represented at the highest levels in regional economic development and business partnerships. In 2018-19 we attracted a £1.2m investment from the ERDF to support research and innovation projects with industry and a further £1.4 million from the Dorset Growth Deal to develop an *Innovation Studio* to support start-ups in the region. The building was designed by Sir Peter Cook of CRAB Studio, who also designed in 2016 the Drawing Studio.
5. AUB entered one unit of assessment in REF 2014 (art and design). Research excellence was identified across all output types with feedback highlighting particular expertise in **design, art history and photographic practice** reflecting our proven record of practice-based and theoretical/historical research in these areas. Since then AUB has been on a rapid journey to develop its research environment alongside the growth and expansion of its discipline base, particularly in performing arts. For REF 2021 it will return research to both UOA 32 and UOA 33.
6. As a specialist HEI, AUB has a sharp research focus that closely matches the discipline portfolio. Key to our research identity but not exclusively so, are the discipline areas of photography, animation, art and design spanning practice, history and theory. Emerging areas include illustration, materials, performance and film.

Our approach to REF 2021

7. All AUB (HE) academic staff are eligible to be returned to the REF. However, AUB departments are constituted from a combination of staff with significant research achievement, high levels of industry experience, expertise in teaching and learning, and skills and knowledge in technical application. Therefore, AUB has applied an additional filter of *Significant Responsibility for Research* for our REF 2021 return determined primarily by a

choice of career pathway i.e. teaching, research or knowledge exchange, or a combination of these.

2. Strategy

Strategic Research and Impact Goals Achieved

8. AUB entered its first submissions to the art and design units of assessment in RAE 2008 (UOA 63) and REF 2014 (UOA 34), when 16 staff (12.1 FTE) were returned.
9. Reflecting the growth of our research culture two units of assessment, numbering over 50 staff are returned in 2021 (UOAs 32 and 33) which broadly map against our academic schools. Our success in REF 2014 led to a 315% increase in our QR funding. Whilst this remains modest at around £130k per annum, it has enabled us to invest in our research environment and offer fully funded PhD studentships for the first time.
10. In our 2014 submission, AUB set out an ambitious but grounded plan designed to focus research activities around proven strengths, embedded research skill training, support staff undertaking research degrees, invest in identified research areas (photographic practices, and animation) and grow a research ecosystem which valued practice, PhD study, and professional development to ensure maximum impact. Our *2014-19 Strategy Map* explicitly identified excellence in research as a core goal to be promoted and invested through an ambitious and sustainable Research and Knowledge Transfer Plan with three aims:
 - i) to develop strong research and KT areas of national and international standing
 - ii) to realise a strategic expansion of staff numbers with research degree supervision capability
 - iii) to achieve an increase in total income generated through R&KT enterprise projects
11. We have been successful in delivering these aims:
 - Higher Education Museums and Galleries (HEMG) Fund recognised the role the **Museum of Design in Plastics** (MoDiP) plays in serving the wider research community through an annual funding award.
 - Costume Design was awarded a **Queen's Award in 2017**, the citation highlighted our 'significant contribution...to the UK's high reputation in this branch of the creative industries and thereby to the UK economy'.
 - Seven-fold increase in the number of **doctoral holding staff**, two-fold increase in supervision to completion, three-fold increase in PhD examination and four completions to date.
 - Increase in £250k of research income generated including successful funding applications to major funders e.g. **AHRC Network** bid in 2019; **Leverhulme** Visiting Professorship in 2020; in addition to European and regional funding of £2.6m.
 - Attracting and employing research leaders of **global standing** to further drive AUB's programme of deepening and enriching our research ecosystem.

Looking Forward - Strategic aims for research and impact

12. The Research Plan is driven the Dean of the Graduate School and Research, supported closely by the Vice-Chancellor and his team, with the aim to:
- i) invest in new appointments to link research to our creative technological expertise so as to realise the potential for global impact and attract funded opportunities for PGR students
 - ii) invest in new infrastructure aligned with existing research strengths in creative technologies so as to further enhance industry collaboration and knowledge exchange
 - iii) continue to build staff research capacity and expertise through strengthening research groupings that are already established (photography, animation, film, drawing) and those nascent (digital and creative Dorset)
 - iv) secure a pipeline from strongly recruiting master's courses through to PGR, seeking competitive and collaborative industrial funding for scholarships

Enabling impact: excellence plus relevance equals Impact

13. Since 2014 a *University Research Impact Plan* has been operational. Its aim to 'demonstrate reach geographically in the local area, the UK and globally; and across a wide range of beneficiaries in the performance, heritage, cultural and education sectors.' All applications for research support require pathways to impact, undergo development and mentor guidance, and are linked to AUB's network of national and global industry partners. Furthermore, research impact benefits from bespoke toolkits devised by the Research Office to capture and track impact and monitored closely through staff Performance Review and university-wide metrics.
14. The Research Impact Plan has delivered:
- increased visibility of AUB research: for example, Lambert's innovative work in plastics has contributed to Radio 4 programmes (*Costing the earth*, 2018); Hunt's curatorial work on Lucienne Day that toured to Dublin; Gough's work on Commonwealth commemoration.
 - increased focus on a university-curated approach to facilitate knowledge exchange: for example, new positions in media liaison, business development and knowledge transfer.
 - increased audience development and international reach: for example, Keeley's work with the Natural History Museum's *Dippy on tour* project; Vallance's curatorial projects at Tate.
15. Furthermore, the Plan has facilitated community participation, locating our research in the public arena to inform social opinion beyond academia. John's research into bullying in the UK creative industries led to five key recommendations adopted by the Federation of Entertainment Unions. Wenham-Clarke worked with disability charities, part-funded by the Genetics Society to realise a comprehensive photographic project, *Our Human Condition*, on the impact of Down's Syndrome, with significant curated exhibitions in London and at the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh.

Addressing regional and national research priorities

16. AUB research contributes to regional and national priorities by engaging with 'real world' issues:

- Tackling the global plastics problem: through its projects and programmes of engagement MoDiP contributed to public understanding of the many benefits that plastics have brought to modern life and the issues that plastics present. (Lambert: BBC Radio 4, *Costing the earth*)
- Addressing technology that touches lives: AUB researchers worked with the national offices of RNLI to support initiatives to 'drown out' death in water in developing countries, such as Zanzibar (Conrad, 2019)

17. Through prioritised research projects AUB is committed to creating deep collaborations, networks and partnerships and to engaging with diverse communities. Wenham-Clarke engaged directly with the mining community in the Portland stone quarries. His programme of site-specific anthropological-visual research was shared with partnered communities via advertising bill boards and site-related exhibitions. Wenham-Clarke's photographic work has provided societal insight into closed gypsy communities discussed in such diverse media as *Marie Claire* magazine and *Radio London*. Whitfield's extensive research enquiries into neurodiversity has impacted – with recognisable results - on the teaching of dyslexic acting students, with recognition across the UK and in the US.

18. As part of a broader engagement between arts, health and social concerns, Foster's photographs were exhibited as part of the health and humanity strand at the World Economic Forum (2020) having been featured in the Wellcome Photographic Prize the year before.

19. AUB works jointly with organisations in the UK and globally. A successful joint AHRC funded Research Network bid with Nottingham Trent University explores critical understandings of participatory textile-making. In 2017 we were successful in a joint RE Catalyst bid with Bournemouth University: *Supporting mental health and wellbeing for postgraduate research students*. Amongst other national networks, AUB collaborated with the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) to establish a co-funded PGR bursary to research the JLP archives. Formal partnerships in the USA, Europe, China and Australasia have led to research exchanges, co-investigations, and joint projects, e.g. funding awarded through the Global Challenges Fund enabled researchers to set up a test environment to assess the viability of manufacturing life-saving devices in communities living in lower Development Assistance Countries (DAC) including Tanzania.

Promoting interdisciplinary research

20. As a specialist arts university with strong links to industry and professional stakeholders we encourage and nurture collaboration across disciplines, promoting cross- and interdisciplinary research both within and outwith the university. Our research projects combine diverse and innovative collaborations such as costume and geology (Keeley), illustration and the built environment (Edwardes), performance and cultural geography (Croose), finance and anthropology (Rosamond), drawing and botany (Bowen), arts and radio-active waste disposal (Weir). Gough's recent interdisciplinary work with military and cultural historians was supported by a major Australian Research Council Discovery Grant (\$310,000) with outputs realised since his appointment to AUB.

21. As part of a commitment to the regional creative industries we have invested in post-doctoral initiatives in the econometrics of the regional cultural economy. The fusion of creative economies, regional recovery and business development is a plank of the AUB RKE strategy led by Hunt and a network of business development managers. Hunt's success (2018-20) in winning ERDF competitive funding will accelerate cross-disciplinary research, practice and impact creation.

Open and accessible: AUB's open research environment

22. AUB is committed to working towards an open research environment. Our progress has been significant:
- Investment in infrastructure by implementing AUBREI online research repository. This project will make our research accessible, open and search-friendly and also allows our practice-based research (which was limited on the previous website) greater functionality
 - Committed wholeheartedly to Open Access, by establishing in 2016 a standing group tasked with creating and implemented policy and best practice, to ensure our website is fully compliant, and staging development sessions for all researchers
 - Mandated our Research Office to actively monitor and support OA compliance. All internal funding schemes are reviewed to ensure they reference the policy and embed best practice. Invited by JISC (2020) Hunt and Gough contributed to a best practice document in assessing practice-based activities.

Research at AUB is based on a foundation of integrity

23. AUB is committed to supporting a culture of research integrity. During the assessment period we have embedded robust and rigorous research ethics at all levels of the University. This has been achieved through:
- An active Research Ethics Committee, which drives our Ethics Policy and requires full compliance with legislation such as Prevent, GDPR and Misconduct in Research. The committee is mindful of the Whistleblowing Policy (which details the protections offered to those identifying malpractice) seeking continuous improvement across all research activity.
 - Induction programmes initiated in 2018 targeted at new staff to highlight the importance of research ethics. This has been honed into a refresher training module required by all research-active staff and has been tailored to scenarios that creative practitioners are likely to encounter.
 - A library of customisable forms to aid staff when seeking ethical approval.
 - A scheme to monitor and review processes which can ensure recency, currency and changes in national ethics guidance. In 2015 the role of *School Ethics Advisers* was introduced. Serving on Research Ethics Committee (REC) these postholders also offer advice and guidance at a local level, and thus are able to offer knowledge pertinent to the practice-researcher disciplines across the university. REC samples a range of proposals

approved at school level so as to ensure adherence to the policy and also reviews more challenging projects that require university-level scrutiny.

3. People

Staffing strategy

24. In 2017 AUB introduced the **Academic Career Framework** (ACF) which created self-determined pathway opportunities for all academic staff; it also offered promotion opportunities to Associate and full Professor, requiring significant achievements against clear criteria and opportunities for research leadership across the university. The number of professorial appointments has risen from four to 12 over the period. Candidates for advancement must meet criteria in a number of categories: quality and volume of research outputs, PhD supervision, contribution to the discipline. AUB's Equalities and Diversities Committee played an instrumental role in the developing the criteria for Professors to ensure that achievement at this level was attainable for those with protected characteristics.
25. The ACF introduced the role of Early Career Academic (ECA) providing an entry grade for new researchers into higher education. A comprehensive programme of support is offered: mentoring by experienced senior staff; funding to achieve research qualifications; academic and professional support for academic writing and grant bidding; and collegiate support through cognate research and practice groupings.

Staff development and people support

26. AUB has made significant investment in staff development over the period, including funding to pursue doctoral study for staff joining the university from creative industries, funding to support time to undertake large research projects (fellowships) and seed-funding for research projects (research support). There is also a strategic focus on building research supervision capability through staff development. New supervisors must complete two credited units in research degree supervision on University of the Arts London's (UAL) MA in Academic Practice. The training is compulsory for all staff appointed to supervisory teams.
27. Results from these staff development schemes have been impressive, with a seven-fold increase in the number staff attaining doctorates, a doubling of our supervision to completion rates, and a three-fold increase in PhD examinations. Recent appointments have significantly increased AUB's ability to attract high quality PhD candidates and attract staff with distinguished records of research. Gough's record of leadership in research assessment (chair of UK and Hong Kong RAE and AHRC panels; membership of assessment panels in Europe, Australia and New Zealand) has brought renewed energy and confidence to the cohort of research managers and team leaders across AUB.
28. Internal seed-funding is available to all staff, irrespective of their FTE, including the opportunity for part-time staff to take blocks of research leave or time in addition to their existing contracts. These schemes were reviewed over the period to ensure they were appropriate to all staff including those with protected characteristics. Our HR Plan for 2014-19 made explicit reference to building research capability so as to:
 - Embed fairness and transparency within reward and recognition schema
 - Improve employee engagement through fair and transparent practices/processes

- Implement wellbeing practices to balance duty of care aspects of Health and Safety.

29. The University has made significant investment to support staff wellbeing with a four-fold increase in specialist wellbeing staff from 0.5 FTE to 2 FTE. All staff have free access to an employee support programme and online support. Staff wellbeing, family-friendly, flexible and Holacratic principles are at the heart of the new Strategy.

Support for PGR students

30. Our research degrees partnership with UAL benefits our students through training delivered by both institutions. All first-year students are required to attend three full block training weeks at UAL. This is supplemented by further training delivered in advance of the key progression stages: registration, confirmation and examination. AUB supports students' attendance by covering costs for travel, subsistence and accommodation to ensure everyone can attend. Over the period, AUB has strengthened its own PGR training which now includes regular PGR symposia delivered by academics with expertise in essential areas such as research ethics or presentation skills. PGR students are encouraged to integrate with academic staff by joining research groups and attending the Annual Research Conference, graduate school lectures and research development workshops run by the Research Office. All PGR student are awarded an annual budget of £500 which must be spent on developmental activity agreed with their supervisory teams. This has supported students to present their work at conferences, undertake bespoke training activities and engage with subject specialist training events such as those given by the National Archives and British Library. One PhD student, for example attended Andidox Lab, Copenhagen, 2016, run by Creative Europe.

AUB commitment to equality and diversity

31. Our commitment is enshrined in our 'Equality at Work' policy (2016) which applies to all recruitment and selection processes, promotion, training, conditions of work, pay and benefits and every other aspect of employment. The policy covers all protected characteristics. The University has been awarded the right to use the Disability Confident Employer Badge highlighting our commitment to good practice in employing people with disabilities. AUB builds staff awareness of diversity and inclusion in 'Diversity in the Workplace' training and 'Unconscious Bias' awareness training which is mandatory for all established staff and refresher training takes place every three years.

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Targeted infrastructure support for research

32. In 2014 AUB made a strategic decision to bring together research and knowledge exchange (R&KE) so as to maximise our engagement, dissemination and impact. Two new manager-level positions were created to harness the work of staff across the university and to maintain our trajectory of applied activity with professional, business and community partners. The R&KE office was reinforced and its works connected more fully with the Graduate School under the leadership of a Dean of Research. As a central resource, driven through the University Leadership Team, the R&KE Office was re-aligned and reinforced to provide a comprehensive prospectus of support, development and targeted interventions across the university, amongst them:

AUB Institutional level environment template (REF5a)

- central delivery of development activity to support researchers, including an active annual Research Conference and other opportunities for researchers to exchange and critique works in progress
 - central co-ordination of visiting researchers, specialists and others dedicated to enriching AUB's R&KE ecosystem, as well as co-ordination of research record keeping, data management, and policy development
 - central administration, management and enhancement of the university's PGR programme, staff development programmes, external funding applications, and integrated support for AUB governance
33. Chaired by the DVC, and supported by the academic Deans and Professoriate, the R&KE Committee has identified existing and future strengths of the university, and linked these to the new University Strategy to maximise research power.
34. Amongst the other initiatives designed to strengthen the infrastructure and to extend the exposure of AUB's research, our Museum of Design in Plastics (MoDiP) invested HEMG funds to extend its reach into the public domain by funding a new Engagement Officer to support dissemination, relevance and reach of its many research projects locally and nationally, with some international reach to other university museums and those engaged in adjacent research. The creation of an AUB Material's Library is further evidence of targeted infrastructural facilities support, derived from and designed through our national links with the plastics industry, material collections, scientific bodies, as well as museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum. Lambert's distinctive research outputs, and her extensive work in the public domain, reflects the depth and strength of this unique archive and living collection, and its focus on the materiality and future conservation of plastics.

Increasing R&KE income

35. Our 2014 Research plan included the strategic aim of increasing R&KE income, including non-UKRI funding such as ACE through three tactics: Training, Seeding and Support:
- Training: bespoke funding workshops were regularly delivered with external trainers on making grant applications; updates were recorded and made available online
 - Seed funding: an active incentive strategy included seed monies to release time to write bids and the introduction of a rigorous process for reviewing and enhancing grant bids prior to submission
 - Support: significant investment into the development and appointment of a new full-time role of Knowledge Exchange (KE) manager with expertise in bid-writing. The KE Manager has since worked alongside the Research Manager in an integrated team.
36. Our plan has had some notable successes:
- Our first AHRC Network award (2018) in conjunction with Nottingham Trent University, resulting from AUB seed funding.
 - Our museum MoDiP was formally recognised by Research England under its *Museums, Galleries and Collections Fund* (£76k per annum, 2017). MoDiP was recognised as the UK's leading resource for the study and interpretation of design in plastics and a specialist research resource for work beyond the institution. It is one of

only 33 museums in the country to be so rewarded and the only accredited museum with a focus on plastics' materiality, design and socio-economic impacts.

37. In December 2020 we opened a £2.8 million *Innovation Studio* funded by the European Research Development Fund, with additional support from Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership. A major plank of our R&KE plan this facility will be Dorset's only operational incubator dedicated to supporting start-ups in the prototyping of new products and in developing a sustainable business plan. In the first phase of the programme 20 start-ups will be supported

Investment in research facilities

38. As a specialist arts university, AUB houses a hi-tech, well-equipped campus, enhanced by significant strategic investment over the period. Practice-based research groups have been favourably impacted:
- TheGallery was refurbished to commercial standard, allowing showcases for leading arts practitioners such as Morag Myerscough and the late Zaha Hadid. Touring exhibitions predicated on research programmes have been hosted, e.g. the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize (2018).
 - CRAB studio is the first drawing studio to be built at a UK art school for 100 years, designed by renowned British Architect Sir Peter Cook it has facilitated research by Bowen and others.
 - Enlarged location for MoDiP with dedicated space for researchers
 - Refurbished photographic studios and dark rooms.
 - Media innovation and research facilities in our 'Black box' studio theatre and sound stage; high-end professional equipment, and new state-of-the-art dance studios. Film investment via industry-standard digital screening room, high end film studios and post-production facilities.
 - Creative technologies infrastructure in 3-D printing, CNC cutters, including fashion studios equipped with digital resources, LECTRA and CLO pattern cutting software.
39. Teams of highly skilled technical support are available to researchers and PhD students. The university has developed career pathways for technical staff that recognises their advanced applied technical prowess.
40. Significant investment has been committed to library's digital infrastructure; spend on ebooks rose by 63% in the period. Dedicated subject librarians support research staff and PGR students. In 2019 the library established an artists' book collection and a new materials library where staff and students can view, handle and analyse samples as diverse as concrete or plastic composites. A new archives policy (2019) supported the acquisition of the Thorp modelling archive and Hooton Pagnell textile archive.