Institution: London Metropolitan University
1. Context and mission

Research is one of the central pillars of our University Strategy for 2019/20-2024/25. It frames our ambition to intensify the social, cultural and economic relevance of what we do. Our ethos has been to focus on small disciplinary clusters which often work across traditional boundaries. We have a long tradition of exceptional research into inequality, injustice and structural barriers; and we work in diverse countries, but also locally. Our focus is on the contemporary world and the recent past. We have peaks of excellence in all Units, notably in Architecture, Area Studies, Computing, and Biomedical Sciences (particularly in virology). We have substantial strengths in traditional subjects within larger unit clusters, for example sociological and political approaches in Area Studies; history and theory within Art and Design; biosciences and applied psychology in Allied Health Professions; and social value focused research in Business and Management. Our research on gender and violence is highly regarded and in demand with external organisations and foundations. Each of our Units of Assessments captures work in which people and their welfare figure significantly: connecting to another pillar of our Strategy, 'Giving Back to our City', where we seek always to act for the public good. In Computing, Allied Health Professions, Art and Design, Architecture, and Business we use our strong connections with local partners to conduct socially significant research for enterprises, hospitals, charities, local governments, and NGOs. We collaborate from the local to the global; we stress interdisciplinarity; and our research and impact connects with HEIF and KEF agendas. Our outputs and impact case studies demonstrate these interconnections.

One-tenth of our nearly 10,000 students are on taught postgraduate programmes, and some 300 are doctoral candidates, split evenly between PhDs and professional doctorates. Our PGT provision is developed from our research activities and provides an opportunity structure for students to progress into postgraduate research: such a route demonstrates our commitment to providing a transformative and empowering culture for our students. Our students are the most ethnically diverse in English HE, 96% of them are from at least one underrepresented group in Higher Education, many being from our local area, and almost all being first-generation university students.

London Met is organized into six academic Schools:

>   School of Human Sciences (SHS)
>   School of Computing and Digital Media (SCDM)
>   Guildhall School of Business and Law (GSBL)
>   School of Social Sciences (SSSC)
>   School of Social Professions (SSPR); and
>   School of Art, Architecture and Design (AAD).

Four of our seven Units of Assessment embrace staff from multiple Schools:

>   Allied Health Professions (SHS, SSPR, SSSC)
>   Area Studies (AAD, GSBL, SSSC, SSPR, SCDM)
>   Education (SSPR, SSSC, GSBL)
>   Art and Design (AAD, GSBL, SCDM).

Computing and Mathematics are contained entirely within SCDM and Business Studies within GSBL.

All our PhD and Professional Doctorate students are members of both the Graduate School and of academic Schools, and generally also of our units, research centres and groups.

The Heads of School report to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who leads our academic portfolios. The DVC is supported by three PVCs, one of whom has express responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange (PVCR). The PVCR works closely with the Head of Research Policy and Implementation who has had responsibility for REF development and the Code of Practice.

The authority for all University policies is the Academic Board (AB), on which research and impact are represented by the PVCR. The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) is a sub-committee of AB, chaired by the PVCR, which generates and monitors policies approved by AB. All major developments in policy and practice are presented to the Senior Leadership Team, of which the PVCR is a member. RKEC also monitors research centre activity. A sub-committee of RKEC, the Research Degrees sub-committee (RDSC), oversees the progress of all PGR students through enrolment, progression and examination, manages the School-level Research Student Progress Groups, and recommends decisions to the Awards Board. The Research Ethics Committee, another sub-committee of RKEC, oversees all ethical aspects of staff and PGR research, monitoring ethical approval committees in each School. These structures maintain, develop and review our Research Policies, and Regulations. Our Research and Postgraduate Office (RPO) supports senior research staff and our research staff.

Research within Schools is organised by Research Leads (RLs) and PGR Coordinators (PGRCs), and at the Unit of Assessment level, by Schools (where this is appropriate for single-unit organisations) or by Research Centres and Groups (where UoAs cross School and disciplinary boundaries): there are specific liaison arrangements to ensure this for each UoA. Our 17 Centres and Groups range across all UoAs and Schools.

2. Strategy

Throughout the assessment period, our Schools have been empowered with devolved funding to support research and impact in their UoAs, subjects, centres and groups. Our strategy since 2014 has been to develop research whilst maintaining and enhancing a wider sense of community through student opportunity and business links. Our achievements thus reflect the strength of the School research cultures. The University provided relevant central administrative and committees. Research integrity was principally driven through School and University level ethics leads and committees, and it was applied to staff and student research.

Research impact continues to be closely connected to our knowledge exchange and enterprise initiatives. We have supported impact as a strategic function within our desire to commercialise research and to develop enterprise through Work-Based Learning, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), KTPs, and public and community engagement (PCE). In AAD in particular, the very culture of the studio system requires student interaction with a wide range of communities beyond the academy, from culture sector professionals, small local business and museums, galleries and archives, to local authorities to NGOs in the Global South. These relationships are reflected in our research outcomes and their impact.

We have made specific investments to promote cutting-edge research and Knowledge Exchange (KE). In 2018 we opened our £500k Cyber Security Centre, whose work now involves research, teaching and business CPD. Along with developing interests in AI and robotics, both of which have been strongly supported by the University in the assessment period - and will be further supported in the next period - our research in Computing has been at the forefront in providing partnership and training with diverse companies, including Cisco and Lloyds Bank. Our researchers in SCDM and the GSBL have worked closely with one of our strongest instruments of KE, our start-up hub, the Accelerator.

We have and continue to promote Open Research and we remain watchful of how OA will develop as a result of the UKRI review, with our intention being to ensure all our future research will comply

with accessibility requirements and through our own e-Prints repository (which we will replace this year with PURE). We utilise QR funding to enable OA journal publication and this will increase. This commitment will extend beyond journal publication as we will also fund OA book, chapter and conference proceeding publication.

Because our research culture centres around relatively small groups, we find interdisciplinarity to be both essential and opportune. It fosters the intellectual and physical closeness that typifies our small University. Subject areas within our Schools are also relatively small and there is natural interaction between them. All Schools and Units contribute to initiatives for staff and students research at the institutional level. Three examples established in our current Strategic Plan period illustrate this:

Our Interdisciplinary Research Forum is constructed to bring together staff and guests from different disciplines to consider an area of potential or actual congruence, and to explore cross-disciplinary and inter-institutional connections that can be used to promote research that engages methodologies, theoretical and data from multiple disciplines to promote co-publication, shared funding bids and training experiences for postgraduates. Organized by two professors, one each from sciences and social sciences, this initiative has teased out unexpected interactions that drive bidding plans and research output. The forum typically attracts 50 or more researchers, a figure more than twice that of our largest UoA.

Our Social Integration and Regeneration Learning Network (led by Professor Diana Stirbu, an expert in social and political policy in the UK and Europe) combines interdisciplinarity and our commitment to social equality. Funded by the Greater London Authority to facilitate local/regional authority regeneration teams in peer-learning and evaluation, it builds capacity and confidence in embedding social integration principles into urban regeneration.

We continue to establish new Centres, such as the Centre of Life and Oral History (CLiOH) and the Global Diversities and Inequalities Research Centre (GDIRC). The latter brings together most of our researchers in Areas Studies, uniting small disciplinary groups in humanities and social sciences.

As we go forward, our approach to research is guided by our 2019-25 University Strategic Plan. We wish to increase the proportion of our academic staff engaged in high quality research to more than 50% over this period. We recognise we have serious gaps in our equality between male and female, and BAME and non-BAME researchers. As part of our mission to decolonise the curriculum and the close awarding gap, we also wish to foster greater equality in research. Equality will be a fundamental driver in expanding of our research community. We describe in section 3 a variety of ways in which we will do this.

Our strategies are also to improve our external research funding profile; to improve our PhD completion rates; and to expand interdisciplinary research and our international collaborations. Our overarching intention is to create an integrated university-wide culture which draws upon subject and thematic expertise to enhance quality, the postgraduate experience, and the potential for collaboration, especially interdisciplinary work.

Over the next strategic period staff and students will continue to be supported to meet their research ambitions. However, more central initiatives will be developed in pursuit of this, including the formation of new research groups, developing the Interdisciplinary Forum, and specific events that showcase aspects of our research for a wider community and user audience. We will increase the impact of our research activities through the knowledge exchange and impact agendas that underpin our central strategic objective of supporting London partners to meet the city's challenges.

Our commitment to research staff will positively impact on them, through rewards in the form of a larger annual research promotion round; sabbatical leave; and greater time allocations for research and impact activity. These developments include enhanced support for those with protected characteristics; commitment to balanced recruitment panels, and a generous parental leave scheme. We also will continue to enhance the PGR experience through training, teaching opportunities, and qualifications such as the HEA associate fellowship status.

Our external partner relationships will continue to grow at local, national and international levels. Where we have business connections through teaching partnerships, we will also seek to develop PhD programmes and research projects. We will promote our commitment to research by placing more emphasis on research quality in the appointment process, and through promoting collaborative research between individuals and research groups across the university.

Going forward into this next cycle we wish to see closer links between the GBSL research into entrepreneurship and the Accelerator, thus connecting this with knowledge exchange and our students' pathways into industry, commerce and enterprise. We recognise that, while research impact is important, it represents only the highest peaks of our engagement with stakeholders, partners and communities. Our KE strategy over this period will pursue streams of activity across and beyond the areas described in our Impact Case Studies, embracing impact more broadly through working with partners, particularly (but not only) with those who are local and London-based. These initiatives will be led our Impact Manager, working more broadly across the University and beyond existing focal points.

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3. People

We are strongly committed to supporting staff research and to improve the PGR experience, and the VC appointed a PVC Research in 2019 specifically to drive this forward. Staff wishing to maintain or develop their research have been identified, and new patterns of workload research allocations and other support have been initiated. Posts have been designated roles for those leading our research, including research and impact leads, ethics officers, and PGR coordinators. After a brief pause in the promotions process in 2017, new annual rounds have been introduced, with 25 promotions (including to reader and professor) in the VC's first year.

The University's research policies, updated with our 2019-25 strategic plan, demonstrate our commitment to supporting and developing our staff. Revised recruitment processes more rigorously assess the research quality and potential of new academic staff, and applicants are also considered for their potential contribution to both current areas of research strength and to areas we wish to develop. As noted above, we are also addressing gender and ethnic minority balance in our appointments process. Equality and diversity are principal components of our new institutional strategy. We have established a Centre for Equity and Inclusion led by a director at PVC level to propel our agenda to support minority promotion via mentorship and training.

Our current gender pay gap is 6.5%—0.5% less than the previous year. Our current REF submission comprises 36% women (all academic staff 47%); and 18% BAME (all academic staff 27%), and 3% are disabled. Only among gay men and women (4%) are staff with research workloads the same proportion as our academic staff profile. Our professors are 30% women and 21.2 % BAME. Our five-year policy is to both to increase female and BAME research activity, and to help such staff achieve promotion. These policies and processes have underpinned our appointment in 2020 of 12 new staff to enhance our research leadership expertise across all Schools, thus enhancing our doctoral supervision capacity, supporting existing staff with bidding and network-building, and advancing the reach of our research culture for staff and students. We will maintain these principles of for existing and new colleagues. Some of our BAME staff are benefiting from mentoring from external experts, and we intend to move to a position where our BAME and female research-active staff are at least proportionate to their number in our wider academic community.

We seek to achieve Bronze Athena Swan level soon, and Silver level by 2025. Our self-assessment team includes key RPO staff and researcher representatives, who are mapping representation in our STEMM and AHSSBL research, and how to improve the opportunities for underrepresented research active staff through staffing policies and the fostering of network groups, such as our LGBT+ and Women's networks. We have been members of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme since 2019.

All staff can avail of mentoring, time and funding to develop to their fullest research potential. Research-active staff have complete individual five-year research plans that identify both their personal objectives and how these will contribute to our wider strategic objectives. We have substantially augmented our staff research-training programme to -research career development at all stages. This is organised by our Centre for Professional and Educational Development, and includes elements tailored variously for ECRs and doctoral supervisors, achieving research impact, and elements for research career development (including sessions on how to take advantage of our mentoring and support arrangements), research staff well-being, advances in particular research methodologies and external sources of research funding. Particular groups of sessions are targeted at researchers in appropriate UoAs and stages in their career development.

Our ECR Policy includes training, workload allocation, mentoring and appraisal, and ECRs have guaranteed leave (at least one semester in six). To this end, we are signatories of the Concordats on Research Integrity and the Concordat to Support the Develop of Research Careers. Our new researcher mentoring programme is organised by School Research Leads. We provide a fee waiver for staff who wish to undertake a PhD part-time basis while working at the University. We use QR funds to staff in presenting at conferences; in undertaking small projects, and to seed fund applications for external grants. We also develop research centres and groups (described in section 4).

Our Graduate School provides a revitalised doctoral training programme for PGRs This includes a specific series of activities for those starting their doctorates, refresher courses on our monitoring and support structures for progressing students, for those preparing for completion and viva, and on post-doctoral careers and opportunities. There are sessions on PGRs well-being, and on developing particular research and impact skills. Other sessions provide more particular methodologies and discipline-specific issues, and these are particularly targeted at PGRs in appropriate UoAs. There is also an annual University conference for PGRs and ECRs, and a staff/PGRs forum.

We intend to increase research income, from all sources, to maintain and increase current levels of support. Part of this strategy is to encourage staff to develop external funding proposals for attracting external funding: we have appointed a Research Funding Manager to help develop funding proposals. The Funding Manager has reached out to local institutions and enterprises to collaborate with our researchers, in line with our strategy to achieve impact and change in London. The RPO subscribes to the Research Professional' portal, to connects individual researchers with the wider community, and provides access to Vitae for on-line skills, employability and professional development platforms. Our intention is to add to the portfolio of administrative resources and external support available for our researchers at all levels.

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Our research and impact infrastructure are described here with reference to PGRs, research staff support systems (individual-level, larger scale and centres), income generation support structures, archival and open-access structures, and policies within the national policy infrastructure.

In REF 2014 we recorded £13.8m of research income and the award of 123 doctorates. Income has fallen in the current cycle and we aim to reverse that trend. Elsewhere, our doctoral completions have increased to 221 (up from 24.6 pa to 31.5 pa). We will, in the next period, introduce a doctoral funding programme to improve our EDI pipeline and provide opportunities for students wishing to develop careers through research.

The University's linking of research and professional practice, demonstrated in the similar numbers of PGRs enrolled in PhDs and those in our professional doctoral programmes in Psychology and Policing, with a new EdD planned for introduction in the next cycle. Our specific PGR infrastructure is the Graduate School and its programme of support, and the structures of annual progression monitoring and ethics support. The need for larger administrative research structures was a

significant element in feedback from staff and PGRs focus groups that informed the development of the new University Strategy. We therefore implemented the development, in 2019, of a RPO to support the entire research community, establishing support structures to prepare funding bids, to manage postgraduate journeys, develop impact strategies and to provide training for all researchers, including PGRs.

Funding to support conference presentation, fieldwork, activities within Centres including seminars, is devolved to Schools, and are available to staff and PGRs. We have responded to staff identifying time as an essential requirement for high-quality research and impact. Schools provide workloads for research and impact activity. A Research Leave Scheme is open for staff with significant research activity, and those with the potential to develop research profiles. All of these are predicated on a robust system of Research Planning, which is linked to the University Mentoring scheme where professors and readers support ECR and other staff prepare and deliver individual plans. All this support for individuals is underpinned by our institutional strategic demand to improve and embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. EDI training has been given for all managers and is embedded within our researcher training programme. Tailored mentoring has been provided for many BAME colleagues through the Centre of Inclusion to support wider equality in research.

For those moving to more complex and collaborative research activities, or who wish to develop research into HEIF-fundable projects, we offer the support of Rescaling and Transformation Funds, distributed centrally with School support. Generally, this support drive initiatives involving collaboration, co-production, student development and to develop staff potential in these areas. Researchers proposing to submit bids to Research Councils and other funders are supported by our Peer Review College, where our most experienced professors offer constructive reflections on bids as they are written (and selection of the best institutional offerings where there are limits on submissions).

These research and impact activities are operationalised by our school-based Research Leads, with support for both individual and team projects through our Research and Postgraduate Office. Our Impact Manager provides training and support for staff and PGRs in developing impact strategies in UKRI and other funding applications. They also help staff identify possible areas of impact that may not have been foreseen.

We are particularly committed to develop Centres, to promote integrated and collaborative research that brings disciplines and other institutions into partnership. In developing events, seminar series and funding bids they create an identity for staff and PGRs, bringing together researchers from across Schools and disciplines. Though most are based in a School, they bring different disciplines to promote interdisciplinarity. Other groups developed have an in-built cross-disciplinary focus, such as the Higher Education Research Group.

Centres are dynamic institutions, responding to staff and PGRs interests. In the review period our two Centres and Groups in SHS (all in UoA3) were relaunched to incorporate new staff and students; a Centre for Primary Health and Social Care Centre in SSP also emerged to embrace our qualitative researchers. In the coming period we will promote the further integration of staff and PGRs into these Centres. SSS staff, for example, currently comprise about 20% of UoA3, and we hope that in future REFs an independent submission in UoA4 will be made, rather than being split between UoAs3/23; and our strength across several social science subjects will allow us to push UoA25 to a higher level, with greater emphasis on its new Centre, doctoral training, and collaborative and international projects.

In our UoA11 several Centres have developed with new strategic drivers in the direction of the discipline: for example, the Cyber Security Research Centre and the Intelligent Systems Research Centre (ISRC) replace earlier Centres. UoA32 continues to organise its research activities in AAD Cities and Architecture of Rapid Change and Scarce Resources, supported by AAD Projects. Changes to the size, structure and focus of our social sciences subjects has brought these disciplines together in UoA25, blending smaller disciplines and interdisciplinary research: thus, the Centre for Global Diversities and Inequalities is a forum for scholarly interests in social sciences, languages and humanities which currently houses two Horizon 2020 projects.

Some of our research attracts outstanding income generation as they interlink pure and applied research, supported by substantial charitable, public sector and civil society contracts, contributing greatly to our intellectual life. CWASU - authoring 22 research reports since 2014 – has become a key resource for European, UK and regional bodies in the area of domestic abuse, and one of our most influential examples of knowledge exchange in social policy, social work and sociology. Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) developed from a particular CWASU projects and is now a social start-up with six contract researchers, providing CPD for our staff and WPL opportunities for our students.

The University houses several major archives, each with an online presence, providing OA materials to the public and academics. They include the Archive of the Irish in Britain (documenting the lives of the Irish in Britain), partly online in partnership with the Irish Embassy in London; the East End Archive (a photographic record East End society); Parker Collection (archiving design records and products of the eponymous furniture company); and TUC library. All can be viewed through our library catalogues. CWASU has an impressive OA repository of all its reports: in the current research cycle 22 reports have been added to reports from 1984). We have a long commitment to host the resources of the Institute of Engineers (India) including reports, educational and research materials.

Our research support is underpinned by a range of policies and commitments which can be viewed from this page: https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/policies/research/.