



## Leeds Arts University Institutional Context

We are an influential, world-facing, creatively driven specialist arts university where professional educators, practitioners and researchers collaborate to develop and enable excellence. We promote distinctive, critically informed and relevant practice in order to support the economic growth and cultural advancement of individuals and society.

The University has roots dating back to 1846 and the original Leeds School of Art. In 1842 the Leeds Mechanics Institute merged with the Literary Society, which led to the formation of The Leeds Government School of Design four years later. We gained University title in 2017 becoming Leeds Arts University, the only specialist arts university in the North of England.

We undertook a significant building expansion project at our Blenheim Walk campus completed in 2019 in order to widen our course offering and benefit our students. During 2020/2021 the University had a total of 2236 UG and 109 PG students. The University's course portfolio is specialist and from September 2020 our offer has consisted of:

### **Postgraduate courses (taught):**

MA Animation	MA Creative Practice	MA Creature Design
MA Curation Practices	MA Digital Fashion	MA Fine Art
MA Graphic Design	MA Graphic Novel	MA Illustration
MA Photography	MA Worldbuilding	

### **Undergraduate courses:**

BA (Hons) Animation	BA (Hons) Comic and Concept Art
BA (Hons) Creative Advertising	BA (Hons) Creative Writing
BA (Hons) Fashion Branding with Communication	BA (Hons) Fashion Design
BA (Hons) Fashion Photography	BA (Hons) Filmmaking
BA (Hons) Fine Art	BA (Hons) Graphic Design
BA (Hons) Illustration	BA (Hons) Photography
BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance	BA (Hons) Textile Design
BA (Hons) Visual Communication	

The University has ambition to gain Research Degree Awarding Powers and is formally engaged in a process with a validating partner which will allow us to offer Doctoral degrees.

### Development of Research

The University has developed the research culture over the previous seven years, establishing a Research Committee in 2013 that reports to the Academic Board. In 2013 the Director of Studies - Higher Education Enhancement and Research [now the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic with a responsibility for research] and a full-time Head of Research were appointed. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic routinely reports on research matters to the Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors. The Head of Research produces an annual research report for consideration by the Research Committee. The Head of Research also chairs the Ethics Sub-Committee, which reports to the Research Committee. The Board of Governors receives regular updates about the development of research and impact.

Since then the Research Team has been established by the employment of two Research Fellows and until September 2020 a part-time Research Associate. These research-only roles were created to invigorate the University's research culture and to provide support and mentoring for those on teaching and research contracts and are directly funded by the University. Currently research at the University falls into two REF Unit of Assessments (UoA): 27, English Language and Literature; 32, Art

and Design: History, Practice and Theory and 33, Music, Film and Performance. All academic staff who work in higher education are on teaching and research contracts or research only contracts. Members of staff on research only contracts currently comprise of the Head of Research, the University Curator, two Research Fellows, and the Progression Manager.

A University Curator was recruited in 2015 to manage the University's galleries. At this point Curation and Library activities became integrated with the University's research strategy. A peer review process was established for exhibitions overseen by an international peer review panel. The University exhibition spaces are a critical part of the research environment where staff as well high-profile international artists can disseminate recognised creative practices. Developments in this area have led to increased public engagement. A full-time permanent role of Research Coordinator was also created in 2018 to provide technical expertise in managing the University's repository, make outputs open access and to provide research administration.

The University has been recognised for its innovative approach in developing practice-based research infrastructure by winning a Times Higher Education Award (THE) in 2016 for *Outstanding Digital Innovation in Teaching or Research* for a collaborative research project with the University of Leeds. In the period 2017-2019 the University received 5 THE shortlisted nominations related to research infrastructure projects.

Teaching and research staff are contracted to carry out 15 days research per academic year pro rata. Over the previous seven years staff numbers have grown in areas of planned growth due to the development of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Leeds Arts University is committed to supporting the development of all its staff including those involved in research. To demonstrate this commitment the University aligned its Human Resources policies and procedures with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

All staff receive inductions and go through probation and appraisals processes regardless of size and length of contract. New teaching and research staff undertake a mandatory induction to research and open access as part of the institution's formal induction programme. Development needs are identified and approved through the appraisal process or as independent requests as part of the CPD framework. Staff are given appropriate training and development, and there is also a programme of mandatory training regardless of role.

The University is committed to equality and diversity in research careers. It has adopted an inclusive approach to the REF 2021 Code of Practice in spirit with the Stern Review 2016. Through its policies and procedures all staff on research only or teaching and research contracts are supported financially to undertake their research irrespective length and size of employment contract. The Selection Process noted in the Code of Practice has been designed to encourage all staff to submit at least one output so that the breadth and diversity of research could be included in the REF2021 submission, the first in the institution's history.

The University's research is funded through its income. There have been occasions where individual researchers have been successful in being awarded funds from external bodies such as the Arts Council and the Wellcome Trust. There is currently not an expectation that Researchers source or secure their own research funding.

The facilities have been planned and developed in line with the University's mission and strategic plan mentioned above. The £22m, state-of-the-art building expansion was completed in order to widen the range of courses offered and to benefit the students. The new building includes a 230-seat performance auditorium, large gallery, specialist industry standard music studios and industry standard film and photography studios, enhanced fashion design studios, a new research and postgraduate study suite, a larger specialist arts research and reference library. The library holds a comprehensive specialist artists' book collection spanning from the previous 50 years.

There is also a range of exhibition spaces around the University comprising The Blenheim Gallery, Vernon Street, The Boardroom, The Rotunda, Curator's Choice or Librarian's Choice. The University Curator manages these spaces. They provide opportunities for academic staff to disseminate their practice-based research. The exhibitions programme also brings other practice-based researchers into the University. The Exhibitions Advisory Board provides valuable peer-review feedback to those researchers submitting to the exhibitions' selection process. The University's galleries are open to the public providing opportunities for the underpinning research to benefit audiences outside academia.

The research and postgraduate teams are situated in the Blenheim Walk building. There are office spaces as well as also large multi-purpose rooms with projection facilities that can be booked for research, impact and dissemination events. The Research Coordinator manages the Open Access provision for research outputs. They share an office with the exhibitions team and a space in the University library. The research estate facilitates research and impact events relevant to the University's researchers.

The University is a member of GuildHE/Research, this is an important association as it provides research intelligence, information about the national research policy landscape and training opportunities. The University's repository is part of a shared resource facilitated by GuildHE/Research.

### **Strategy**

The University's mission is published in the Strategic Plan 2017-2023. It states '*We are an influential, world-facing, creatively driven specialist arts university where professional educators, practitioners and researchers collaborate to develop and enable excellence.*

*We promote distinctive, critically informed and relevant practice in order to support the economic growth and cultural advancement of individuals and society.'*

The Strategic Plan includes aims that refer particularly to research:

***To continue to develop and progress relevant research practice which enhances teaching and learning, is globally significant and contributes positively to society.***

- *To encourage and support collaborative approaches within our practices.*
- *Through investment, recruitment, support and development to increase our proportion of academic staff who are rated as 2\* and above.*
- *To increase the number and range of collaborations with peer institutions in the UK and globally.*
- *To increase the number of staff qualified to doctorate and masters level who support undergraduate and postgraduate students and increase the number of postgraduate students, particularly through international partnerships.*
- *To advance our libraries, exhibitions and archives capability to support research.*

The University has been successful in meeting these aims through a Research Strategy 2013-2018 (amended and extended through to 2021 in 2019-2020). The approach taken by the University is to encourage independent research.

Strategic and infrastructure planning for research began before 2013. At this point all staff teaching in higher education were appointed on teaching and research or research only contracts and a dedicated research budget was established. The Research Strategy 2013-2018 (amended and extended through to 2021 in 2019-2020) was approved through the deliberative structure.

The main objectives were to:

1. Establish postgraduate programmes to enhance and progress practice-based research and scholarly activity in subject disciplines.

2. Develop research across the College [University] and encourage international links to enhance research outcomes.
3. Source research funding, as appropriate, from a wide range of sources.
4. Support our staff and help them to develop their research practice; encourage internal collaboration; and, through external networks and meetings, enhance subject-specialist knowledge (especially as it relates to teaching and learning).

In addition to the objectives described in the Research Strategy, a strategic Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for research of 20% of the REF 2021 submission being judged at being 2\* had been agreed.

Impact from arises from the researchers' interests, networks, publics and audiences. Researchers are supported through the research budget in building long-term relationships with the beneficiaries of the research. Systematic support, training and mentoring are provided to those researchers whose work demonstrate impact outside academia. Activities that build impact are reported in the Research Committee minutes and through the Vice-Chancellor's report to the Board of Governors in regular updates. Research staff are responsible for identifying, documenting, measuring and providing evidence for the impact of their work. The impact case studies are made visible to the public and are celebrated through the University's website. Where interdisciplinary research is central to a researcher's practice it is facilitated through the research proposal process where individuals can request funds to support collaborative working with researchers from other institutions and disciplines.

The University's Ethics Policy sets out the guiding principles of ethical practice and also the expectations relating to research integrity. Research misconduct is described in the Ethics Policy and addressed through the University's disciplinary policy and procedure. The Ethics Sub-Committee plays an important role in supporting research integrity; it reviews the Ethics Policy every three years and reviews staff research proposals on an annual basis. It is able to meet and respond to ethical issues as they arise.

### **The next five-year period**

We are looking to develop our research going forward, and it is important that the strategy over the next five years is based upon a reflection on the success of University policies, processes and procedures during 2013-2020. The outcome of REF 2021 will also inform this reflection and we aim to publish a review of performance in REF2021 by the end of 2022 that informs the next research strategy.

In terms of developing support for researchers, through the process of continuous improvement, we intend to develop the research infrastructure to meet the particular needs of UoA 32, UoA 33 researchers. It will provide support to newly established creative writing researchers from UoA 27 English Language and Literature. We will continue to support and develop researchers through current research internal funding mechanisms and support interdisciplinary research where it evolves from the researchers' own interests, relationships and networks whilst utilising the University's research galleries and specialist collections to facilitate individuals' research.

We aim to secure a doctoral validating partner and begin supporting practice-based PhDs. We intend to develop clear and transparent policies and procedures relating to ethical review, research integrity and academic misconduct and develop approaches to support research students and ECRs. When this work starts it will be supported by the planning for HR Excellence in Research with our actions updated accordingly.

Will we continue to support the growth of distinctive research cultures appropriate to the diverse arts subjects represented in the University. In doing this we will ensure the diversity and inclusiveness

of the research cultures that develop in the University and develop sustainable research practices. In Autumn 2021 we will be hosting our third sustainability symposium.

### **The Concordat and HR Excellence in Research**

As can be seen from this document research in the University is still at an early stage with only 5 staff holding research only contracts, and 3 of those having other management responsibilities. The HR Excellence and Research has therefore been applied to assist in developing good practices across the University, and whilst Research only staff benefit from certain activities, many of the actions are applied across the University.

The Research Committee consists of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic, Head of Research, University Curator, Research Coordinator, 2 Research Fellows, 5 elected HE academic representatives and the Head of Postgraduate Studies. Below the Research Committee is the Ethics Sub-Committee which exists to maintain high ethical standards in the conduct of teaching and learning activity, it is proactive and responsive to the needs of research or professional practice undertaken either at, or under the auspices of the University. The Research Committee is accountable to the Academic Board.

The development of the plan has been driven by the Head of HR, the Head of Research, and the Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic; who drafted both the original and new action plans. The plans have been scrutinised by the University's Research Committee and submitted to our Academic Board for approval. Progress against actions on the plan is monitored through the Research Committee and again this is reported to our Academic Board.

The composition of the Research Committee means that our researcher population had significant involvement in the development, approval and monitoring of the action plans.