THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

RESEARCH AND IMPACT STRATEGY 2013-2016

This strategy describes the research university that Kent seeks to be, the staging points that will show progress towards its goals, and the actions and procedural arrangements designed to support that progress.

Research is fundamental to the character of the University, its reputation, and its contributions to society. The overall ambition is to increase research intensity: by raising the proportion of academic staff conducting research and producing publications and other outputs of the highest quality.

Research at Kent is rooted in strong disciplines. The University expects all its academic schools to engage in research and to achieve recognized standards of international excellence.

The University supports research in all 20 academic schools across its three faculties of Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences. The results of the national Research Assessment Exercise in 2008 identified areas of research in each of the three faculties that were ranked in the top ten nationally: History, French, Law, Social Policy, Materials Science, and Statistics. The RAE 2008 assessed 54% of research activity as 3* or 4* in quality; work that is world leading or internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour. The intention of this strategy is to continue building on these strong foundations and to raise the volume and quality of research and its benefits to society.

The University of Kent Institutional Plan 2012-2015\(^1\) describes three key areas in which the university will be distinctive and class-leading:

- our inspiring and distinctive education that prepares students to make a positive contribution to help shape a better world
- our innovative and world-leading research
- our positive impact regionally, nationally and especially internationally

The research ambitions of the University are closely aligned with this focus on teaching and students, and on regional, national and international impact.

Research and teaching support each other; they are not in competition. Kent undergraduates are taught from their first year by academics who are research leaders. Postgraduate and research students are recruited in areas of research excellence. Over the period of this Strategy the University will substantially increase the numbers of funded research students across its disciplinary range.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) [http://www.kent.ac.uk/about/plan/](http://www.kent.ac.uk/about/plan/)

\(^2\) Graduate School Strategy 2012-14 [web link to be added when available]
Since its creation in 1965, the University has placed particular emphasis on both interdisciplinary programmes for its students and interdisciplinary research by its staff. Funders of research increasingly recognize that key problems will only be solved if researchers work in multi-disciplinary teams. Much of the most useful and innovative research crosses the boundaries of established disciplines, and is conducted with other universities or in collaboration with government, the private sector and charities. This strategy sets out objectives and procedures that will expand the volume and range of collaborative research by supporting teams within the University and by developing alliances with other organisations.

At the same time the strategy recognizes there are limits to how far output and quality can be planned and managed. The production of knowledge is a bottom-up rather than a top-down process. Good research is the product of the ideas and commitment of individual members of academic staff, or of groups of academic staff who have chosen to work together. The University cannot dictate that a particular amount and quality of research is produced according to a timetable. Rather it can provide the facilities, support and incentives (the environment) that encourage research and its outputs and impact.

_The University Plan 2012-2015_ includes a commitment to 'promote diversity and inclusivity in the University community by offering fair treatment and equality of opportunity to every member of the University (staff and students)'._ This Strategy includes targets and procedures designed to encourage best practice in the support and development of staff and their research careers.

There need to be explicit mechanisms and planning procedures that allow academic schools and staff to propose new or redirected investment in research activity where they see potential. In return the University asks that its staff meet broad thresholds of performance. In its financial plans for 2011-14 the University has made substantial additional investments in new staff and in post-graduate studentships that will increase the institutional capacity to do research.

This Strategy is presented in three main parts:

A. the core strategic ambitions, and a framework of characteristics that describe them in more detail,

B. the main objectives whose attainment will ensure the ambitions are fulfilled, and

C. the research management and administrative actions and procedures that will be used to achieve the objectives.
A. The core strategic ambitions

The University will increase the volume and intensity of world leading research across the whole of its disciplinary range.

A growing proportion of research activity will be interdisciplinary and involve partnerships with other research institutions.

The University will more deliberately seek ways to ensure that its research has beneficial impacts within its region and more widely.

All teaching will be supported by research activity; all students will have contact with the best researchers and their ideas and findings.

The defining characteristics of the core research ambitions

1. The University of Kent will continue to be recognized internationally for the excellence of its research across its subject range. The main indicators of research performance (the outcomes of REF2014; research grant income; research student numbers; the quantity and quality of research outputs; citations; and the impact of our research) will clearly place Kent amongst the research universities. We define the research universities as the Russell Group and the 1994 Group; our peer group for benchmarking comprises those English research universities with areas of research expertise similar to our own.

2. Research at the University will be distinguished by a growing volume of interdisciplinary work supported by grant income from prestigious sources, and will increasingly take place within strategic research alliances with other institutions.

3. The University will continue to ensure that research informs and improves the teaching and supervision it provides to undergraduates and postgraduates, and the imaginative use of research in teaching will be a recognized feature of the institution.

4. Research activity and outputs will have growing impact through the exchange of knowledge and technology with partners, in ways that develop innovative and marketable uses, and add economic, social, educational and cultural value within the region and more widely.

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3 Our peer group for benchmarking purposes comprises 33 English Universities with areas of research expertise similar to our own. These are 10 from the 1994 Group (Birkbeck, East Anglia, Essex, Goldsmith’s, Lancaster, Leicester, Loughborough, SOAS, Royal Holloway and Sussex) and the three former 1994 Group members (Bath, Reading and Surrey), together with the enlarged Russell Group members (Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Exeter, Imperial College, King’s College, Leeds, Liverpool, LSE, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, QMUL, Sheffield, Southampton, UCL, Warwick and York).
5. The University will maintain a research profile consistent with its continuing recognition as a European and internationally focussed institution, in particular by continuing to give priority to collaborative research with European partners and to winning of research funding from the most prestigious sources within the European Research Area. These intentions are set out in more detail in the *Internationalisation Strategy 2007-2012*.

6. The University will ensure that all research undertaken by its staff and students conforms to best practice in terms of research integrity as set out in the *Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. It will support equality and diversity amongst its staff and students through initiatives such as *Athena Swan* and implement best practice in staff development such as the *Vitae Researcher Development Framework*. It will seek to be awarded the *Human Resources Excellence in Research Badge*.

7. The University supports the principles and objectives of Open Access and Open Science as outlined in its *Open Access Policy*. It will seek routes that make all forms of output from its research available freely and accessibly in ways that allow them to be used and re-used for the benefit of the wider society. The University has a preference for *Universal* or *Green* Open Access, as ways of achieving wider and more feasible access to its publications, but will support *Gold* Open Access where resources are available.

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4 *Internationalisation Strategy 2007-2012* [web link to be added when available]
5 *http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf*
6 *http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/
7 *http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Researcher-Development-Framework.html*
8 *http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4ResearcherOrgs*
9 *Open Access Policy* *http://www.kent.ac.uk/researchservices/policies/open-access.html*
10 Universal: publication in an online, peer-reviewed open access journal which makes articles immediately available free of charge to either readers or authors.
11 Green: where a version of the final article can be placed by the author in an (or many) Open Access repository. This may be subject specific, (such as arXiv for physics, RePEc for economics or SSRN for law and other social sciences, or institutional, such as the Kent Academic Repository (KAR)). In order to comply with the RCUK mandate via the ‘Green’ route, it is the ‘version of record’ (i.e. the final version after refereeing) that must be deposited. Often this version cannot be made freely available until after an embargo period (typically 6-24 months).
12 The Gold route follows the normal journal publishing route except that on receipt of an Article Processing Charge (APC) the journal makes that individual article immediately freely available to readers without subscription.
B. Measurable objectives entailed by the research ambitions

1. Research grant income per HEFCE-funded member of staff in all subject areas will reach at least the average of our Peer Group.

   Externally funded research income will need to double\(^{13}\) in order to meet this benchmark, which in the current financial climate is extremely challenging. This objective is a long term goal and it is expected that during the period the gap will be closed. The core target is to achieve a 50% increase in the value of new grants awarded in the financial year 2015-2016 compared with 2012-13. Schools will be asked to include in their annual research plans targets for new awards that are milestones against which progress can be gauged.

2. The numbers of research students, post-doctoral and research staff, and externally funded research fellows per HEFCE-funded member of staff will reach at least the average levels attained by our Peer Group in most subject areas.

   The University has increased support for postgraduate research students and currently funds over 100 new studentships each year. The Graduate School will continue to monitor completion rates against the sector norms. Research Services will include comparative data on research student and research assistants\(^{14}\) in its data system and key indicators (KRIMSON see C4 below).

3. Citation rates per staff member will be comparable to those in our Peer Group across the University’s subject range\(^{15}\).

   Whilst citation rates will play a lesser role in the REF than previously anticipated, bibliometrics are becoming increasingly important in terms of esteem and league tables, and potentially for impact. As well as using SCOPUS for year on year analysis, the REF results will be an opportunity to calibrate research quality. The availability of published outputs on the Kent Academic Repository (KAR) increases the likelihood of citation. Research Services and Information Services will support schools to facilitate the effective use of KAR.

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\(^{13}\) See https://www.kent.ac.uk/planning-local/benchmarking/files/research/RtStaffFTE_selcc_ALLTandR_1011.pdf (internal only). Humanities is approximately a third of the Peer Group, Sciences is also approximately a third, and Social Sciences approximately a half (2010/11).

\(^{14}\) Data from the 2008 RAE shows that PGR FTE per academic FTE average for our Peer Group is 1.42. Kent had 1.29 ranking 22/34. In terms of post-doctoral and research staff FTE our Peer Group average per academic FTE was 0.54, Kent had 0.32 ranking 28/34.

\(^{15}\) In 2011 Thomson Reuters Papers data showed Kent (compared with 94 group) average citations per paper as: Humanities and Languages 0.72 (1.68); Social and Related Sciences 1.09 (1.25); Maths, Sciences and Engineering 0.89 (1.42). Source: UL HE Research Yearbook 2011.
4. Research performance in disciplines newly established at the University and on the newer campuses at Medway, Brussels and Paris will demonstrate clear progress towards the overall research ambition.

The newer subject areas in the University (Pharmacy, Architecture, Sports Studies, Forensic Science, Actuarial Science, Music and Fine Art, and Journalism) are developing their research cultures and will benefit from specific support to realise their ambitions.

5. The University will, in the overall context of a research-led institution, increase the number of research areas where the University is recognized as class-leading. These are likely to include cross disciplinary and cross institutional collaborations.

In order to sustain an international research reputation it is necessary to be more than good in all areas of activity. A reputation as a research university can only be fully secured when is recognized as amongst the top few in a more limited range of specialities. A reputation of this order is usually associated with the presence of established, self-funding research units or centres, often with significant knowledge exchange, commercial and policy activity. Units or centres such as these are unlikely to develop unless the University identifies exceptional potential and risks significant investment in its development and exploitation. Not all such investments will succeed. Research impact and knowledge exchange impact will be considered in the business cases for establishing such centres. Research Services will work with Faculty and School Directors of Research to identify, measure and monitor areas of strength, and potential strength. Research Services will reassess the current procedures for three-yearly review of existing Research Centres by faculties and the Board for Research and Enterprise (BRE) in order to determine whether they are objective and effective and whether they might be used to identify areas worthy of additional investment.

6. The University will continue to establish formal research partnerships and consortia with other universities and related organisations. These partnerships will increasingly drive the content and direction of the University's research, teaching and supervision.

The research funding environment and the research problems of our time demand larger cross-institutional solutions. Intellectually driven research collaborations developed by individual academics with staff in other institutions must remain at the heart of this objective. Audits show that university staff are involved in over a hundred of these relationships at any one time and many benefit from support for international visitors. The University has formed consortia with other universities to win RCUK doctoral training funds and EU Erasmus cross-national programme funding, and has institutional research alliances in the health and personal social services, materials sciences and optics. It will build on these alliances. Research
Services will work with Faculty Directors of Research to identify existing and prospective partnerships for development and investment.

7. The University will establish mechanisms that record the impact of its research both within and beyond academe and inform the further development of mechanisms at university, faculty and school levels that deliberately advance impact. It will develop and implement a strategy to support greater engagement with its research by relevant stakeholders and the wider public.

*Impact includes not only the types of consequence identified in the REF but also academic impact, and impact in terms of research informed and research active teaching. REF2014 will allow impact sub-profiles to be compared with benchmark institutions. Kent Innovation and Enterprise (KIE) and Research Services will develop guidance and mechanisms that allow academic schools to collect and store data that describes and measures the impact of research. These methods are addressed in more detail in the Innovation and Enterprise Strategy. Research Services will increase the number of commercialisation and knowledge exchange opportunities reported to KIE.*

8. The University will upgrade its research management and administration systems and strengthen the use of research data including integration with research governance information, the achievement of open access targets, and development of research data holdings.

*Currently a number of processes within Research Services and across the University as a whole are not supported by modern IT systems. We will create Kent Research Information Management System On-line (KRIMSON). This system will, by 2015-16 provide Research Services and the wider University with a comprehensive pre- and post-award research management and administration system. KRIMSON will also provide a focal point for information about the research and impact activities of academic staff, allowing them to monitor and update their activities. It will link research output information (from KAR) and other research outcomes such as datasets, and information on research projects and research students. These data sources will be linked in order to provide a comprehensive mini-CV for individual academic staff covering research, impact and teaching activities.*

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[16] Innovation and Enterprise Strategy [web link to be added when available]
C. Actions and procedures that will enable the University to achieve its research objectives and fulfil its core research and impact ambitions

In order to realise the ambitions of the strategy actions are proposed at University level [U], Faculty level [F] or School level [S].

1. KPIs that monitor the attainment of the research objectives.

A suite of KPIs at University, School and Research Centre level will be developed by Research Services to measure progress against the objectives identified in section B, against the Peer Group, and to populate the University Academic Dashboard:

a) Research Grant income per FTE [U]

b) PGR, PDRA and RFs per FTE [U]

c) Citations per academic staff member (in appropriate subjects) [S]

d) Open Access Publications (OA) [U]

e) University OA Journals (eg feminists@law)17 [U]

f) Use of a comprehensive Work Allocation Model [U]

(In most cases these data will be available at REF UoA level and allow benchmarking with other institutions. In some cases it will be available at the level of the individual academic for internal use)

2. The roles of faculty and school Directors of Research (DoRs) will be clearly defined, monitored and supported.

The selection, training and support of both School and Faculty Directors of Research have varied across the institution. The Working Group on University Governance will establish clear procedures for selection, appointment, training, administrative support and compensation for staff who take these and similar roles. The BRE will provide greater guidance on the roles of Directors of Research.

3. Academic research profiles

Data will also be produced at the individual academic level for research activities (projects, PGRs and research outputs) which can be used to generate information on the web (KAR already does this for research publications). This will be augmented by additional information such as research interests and data-sets to produce an on-line research CV. Over time the ambition is to go further than this and produce a more rounded CV including enterprise, out-reach, impact and teaching activities.

Specific actions to support Academic Research Profiles:

i) Implementation of KRIMSON to manage academic mini CVs [U]

17 http://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/feministsatlaw
ii) Training for academic staff to keep profiles updated [U]

4. Research Management and Administration (KRIMSOn).

Research Services will put in place a Kent Research Information Management System On-line (KRIMSOn). It will be fully operational by 2015-16.

Through involvement in a HEFCE-JISC funded national Research Management and Administration System (RMAS) project Research Services has developed greater expertise in the area. The plan for KRIMSOn include:
  i) Appointment of a project manager in 2012-13
  ii) Procurement of electronic research administration modules
  iii) Integrate KRIMSOn with other core business systems
  iv) Provide clarity on IS support for researchers
  v) Provide research data management facilities

5. Procedures to raise research performance in new departments and at Medway, Brussels and Paris.

i) Research Services will review, in consultation with relevant schools, the current configuration of Research Funding and the Research Contracts teams to ensure appropriate and accessible support for these and future sites.

6. Procedures to develop and support class-leading research units and excellence in interdisciplinary research

The University will invest additional funding in class-leading research where the University has a competitive advantage. Recent examples include support for the Centre for Molecular Processing, the Centre for Child Protection, and Kent Health and the Centre for Health Service Studies. The £400,000 per annum University Research Investment Fund to support these ambitions will continue throughout the life of the Strategy. Research Services and Directors of Research will develop and consider criteria and mechanisms that can be used to identify research investment priorities, and to evaluate the outcomes of investment. Centres will continue to be subject to triennial review. Research Services will reassess the current procedures for three-yearly review of Research Centres by faculties and the BRE in order to ensure they are objective and effective.

7. Procedures to develop the capacity of staff to increase externally funded research.

Research Services will enhance provision of funding opportunities intelligence and the Funding Team will develop support for the planning of submissions and strategic bids.
The availability of more management information (KRIMSoN) will aid this process.

The 'Large and Complex Research Grant Application Support Fund' will continue at £50,000 per annum during the period.

The successful University-wide Early Career Research (ECR) Network will be sustained.

The system of research grants funded and allocated by the faculties will be continued and more clearly advertised by Research Services. Research Services will develop mini websites which direct staff to all available sources for support for research initiatives at University and faculty level.

Focused support (particularly under the auspices of the ECR Network) will continue to be provided to raise the grant winning skills: the Grants Factory and targeted information days for specific funders and interdisciplinary subject areas.

Greater professorial input into the support for ECRs. The Professorial and Managerial Increments Panel will define more clearly the expectations of leadership and support of research agendas and of other staff that are expected of the professoriate.

8. Procedures to identify, record and support impact.

KIE will continue to provide support for research impact through schemes such as: follow on funding, the patent fund, investment funds for start-up companies, sourcing of expert guidance, support in applying for external funding and co-funding for impact through knowledge exchange.

KIE and Research Services will work with schools and faculties to develop a suite of KPIs to measure progress in support for impact, this will include KTPs, idea and invention disclosures and engagement of staff in innovation and enterprise activities already recorded as KPI’s in the annual HEB-CI survey.

The University will ensure that impact, enterprise and innovation activities are included as criteria for academic promotion.

9. Procedures to identify, record and support public and community engagement by University staff

Research Services will work with Corporate Communications, KIE, schools and faculties to develop a method for recording public and community engagements.
Research Services will lead the development of a database (possibly as part of KRIMSON) of public and community engagement activities.

10. Work allocation models and time available for research.

Comparative data (TRAC, HESA, RAE comparators) show a high commitment of academic staff time to teaching and administrative functions. Schools need, as part of the articulation of research strategies and targets (at collective and individual levels) to further professionalize support for learning, teaching and quality management.

Research Services and the Annual Research Reviews will continue to monitor the use of Work Allocation Models and provide guidance on common standards and principles that inform the allocation of research credits within school WAMs.

Research Services will collaborate with HR in providing an annual review of the incidence and allocation of Study Leave within academic schools.

11. Recognition of research achievement

Success in research and research leadership is explicitly rewarded through the university promotion procedures. Directors of Research and BRE will review the ways in which research success is recognized in terms of institutional recognition and the allocation of research time. This could consider reductions of teaching and administration (in addition to the existing study leave allowance), or extra research or administrative support.

Specific support for research career development:
   i) A University Research Fellowship Scheme. The University will develop criteria and allocate funding to support a research fellowship scheme designed to allow staff extended periods of time in which to develop or complete important work, or to provide leadership in areas of particular promise or strategic importance. Up to 6 fellowships a year will be supported. Fellows will be expected to fulfil a leadership role in a particular area of research.

12. Ensuring the integrity of the University's research

The University will (by 2014) refresh its policy on research conduct in light of the recommendations from the 2012 'Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity'.
D. Related Institutional Strategies and Policies

1. Kent Institutional Plan (University Plan 2012-15)
2. Research Strategy (2009-12, previous version of this Strategy)
3. Internationalisation Strategy (International Impact)
4. Innovation and Enterprise Strategy
5. Graduate School Strategy
6. School and Faculty Research and Impact Plans
7. Open Access Policy
8. Research Data Management Policy
9. Ethics and Governance Policy
11. Medway Strategy
12. Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy
13. Information Services Strategy