

**Birkbeck,
University of London**

**College Research Strategy
2010-2013**

**BIRKBECK (University of London)
RESEARCH STRATEGY 2010-13**

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RESEARCH STRATEGY 2010-2013

Introduction

1. Birkbeck is a world-class research and teaching institution, a vibrant centre of academic excellence and London's only specialist provider of evening higher education. Our academics are engaged in conducting research that is actively pushing back the boundaries of the world's knowledge across the disciplines.
2. The College Mission Statement states that, among the College's principal aims, are the aims to:
 - Maintain and develop excellence in research and provide the highest quality research training in all our subject areas.
 - Make available the results of research, and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate.

And that, among the College's main supporting objectives, are the objectives to:

- Achieve and maintain strong research cultures in support of interdisciplinary work in each school and faculty.
 - Ensure the College provides an inclusive working and learning environment for its students and staff so that all may develop to their full potential.
3. According to the 2008 RAE results, Birkbeck ranks in the top 25% of UK multi faculty HEIs. All 17 Birkbeck submissions had at least 60% of their research classified as 'internationally recognised', whereas 11 of 17 had the majority of their research categorised as 'internationally excellent' and 'world leading'.
 4. Other achievements reflect Birkbeck's ongoing commitment to delivering world-class research. Birkbeck was ranked in the top 15 of UK research-led institutions, in the Complete University Guide for 2010 and was ranked 152nd in the world in the Times Higher Education Top 200 Universities. The expertise of our staff is recognised by external funders. Our academics were engaged in externally funded research grants worth a total of £53m in 2009/2010.
 5. The College has adopted this Strategy to define how it will attempt to meet its aims and objectives in relation to research in the period 2010-2013. It will outline objectives for the College and its schools, departments and professional services, giving guidance on the location of responsibility for the development of specific policies and support for research. It will also highlight specific projects to be undertaken during the period at College level in support of the Strategy.

Development of the Strategy

6. The Strategy was developed during the Academic Year 2009/10 by a Working Group of Research Committee, consisting of:
 - Professor Stephen Frosh, Pro-Vice Master (Research)
 - Professor Claire Callender (School of Social Sciences, History & Philosophy)
 - Professor Patrick Hanafin (School of Law)
 - Professor Esther Leslie (School of Arts)
 - Trevor Pearce (Registry Services)

- Professor Alex Poulouvassilis (School of Business, Economics & Informatics)
 - Professor Bonnie Wallace (School of Science)
7. The Group met on 5 occasions, inviting professional service representatives as appropriate. The draft Strategy was forwarded to Research Committee, who recommended it for approval in October 2010 Academic Board adopted the Strategy on 10 November 2010.
 8. Research Committee will keep the Strategy under review throughout the period, receiving reports on progress against identified objectives and reporting as appropriate to Academic Board.
 9. Schools will be required to develop their own research strategies as part of their school strategies, identifying their own plans to meet the objectives identified in this College Strategy. Schools will be asked to report progress against their own strategies on a regular basis by Research Committee.

Key Aims

10. In order to maximise and demonstrate the quality of its research, the College should, over the period of the strategy, aim to do the following:
 - Maximise its performance in each submitted unit of assessment for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework, when compared with performance within the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise;
 - Maximise research grant income received by each school;
 - Attract and retain research active staff of international standing, to enable each department to demonstrate a research environment appropriate for the support of international standard research;
 - Maximise income generated by the commercialisation and knowledge transfer of its research;
 - Maximise the number of research students enrolled by the College and ensure their good progress towards achievement of their degrees.

Key Objectives

11. In order to support these Aims, the College objectives over the period are:
 - To ensure that there is research leadership by staff with strong research profiles in each subject area within each school of the College
 - To maximise high-quality outputs from research active staff for submission to the REF
 - To maintain the level of grant income received in the College across the period covered by this Strategy;
 - To increase the number of research grant applications made across the College by 5%, while at least retaining the proportion of applications funded at the current level;

- To increase the number of staff holding research grants across the College by 5% across the period covered by this Strategy;
- To increase the number of research students by 10% across the period covered by this Strategy, while maintaining submission rates above 60% within 4 years (full-time) / 7 years (part-time) across the College.
- For each school to establish a clear strategy in relation to the impact of research, for example by establishing objectives in relation to impact upon government policy, commercial applications, impact on other research or other discipline-specific indicators.
- To increase the total value of contracts (excluding VAT) generated by the College from the commercialisation and knowledge transfer of its research outcomes by 15% across the period covered by this Strategy.

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

12. Recruitment and retention of high quality research active staff is fundamental to the achievement of the College's key objectives. The College must recruit and retain staff with a demonstrable record of internationally recognised research in each of its identified areas of academic work in order to sustain its research mission through the production of excellent research outputs as well as to support the environment that will attract success in grant applications and will attract numbers of high calibre research students.
13. The College objective is to ensure that there is research leadership by senior members of staff with strong research profiles in each subject area within each school of the College, and that all academic members of staff are research active, operationally defined as having a strong output profile suitable for submission into the REF.
14. In order to support this objective, departments and schools will:
 - Review staffing in each Department, and identify areas where departments do not currently meet the objective;
 - Formulate staffing plans, in the context of schools' annual and "five year plans", to bring departments into line with this objective;
 - Ensure all new academic appointments are of academic staff with strong research records or clear research promise and with demonstrable capacity for producing a strong REF profile;
 - Ensure flexibility of teaching and administrative arrangements including where appropriate sabbatical and study leave provision to incentivise and aid retention of research active staff;
 - actively encourage successful research activity through the promotion procedures.
15. Professional Services will:
 - Conduct a staff survey with a view to identifying institutional barriers to attracting high quality staff to the College. [Human Resources]

16. The College will:

- Consider plans, via its Strategic Planning Committee, to appoint staff where appropriate within departments to bring them in line with this objective, subject to resource constraints;
- Monitor the research quality of proposed new appointees to academic posts and where necessary intervene to ensure that research quality is sustained;

Research Performance

17. Like previous research assessment exercises, the REF will value the quality of research outputs and publications more highly than any other single aspect when judging the quality of submissions. Submitted staff will be expected to have produced four outputs within the census period. This provides a simple and reasonably appropriate proxy measure for research achievement.

18. Each academic member of staff will therefore normally be expected to have produced at least four high quality research outputs over the census period. The College, its schools and departments will need to establish support structures so that staff are in a position where they can be reasonably expected to meet this target.

19. In order to support this objective, individual staff members will:

- Develop research plans, in liaison with mentors and senior academic staff as appropriate, towards the publication of at least four outputs by the census date for the REF;
- Submit outputs, making revisions as necessary, to ensure the publication of at least four outputs.
- Ensure that all publication details are recorded on the Institutional Repository, supplying publications for open access where copyright allows.

20. Schools will:

- Ensure that monitoring procedures are in place and are applicable to all academic staff, with appropriate adjustments for levels of seniority;
- Ensure that each research active member of staff has the opportunity to access a mentor, who will discuss individual research plans with that member of staff, giving guidance and support in producing appropriate publications;
- Make active use of sabbatical/study leave arrangements tied to mentoring in order to ensure that academic staff have the opportunity to develop and complete research projects;
- Review, via the School Research Committee or other appropriate forum, individual research plans on an annual basis to ensure consonance with school research strategies;
- Support the development of research groups and centres where these can be shown to have clear promise in maximising research achievements.

21. Schools may delegate responsibility in these areas to departments or REF Unit of Assessment Leads where necessary.

22. Professional Services will:

- Develop the College's Institutional Repository to facilitate storage of publication details and publications where necessary [Library].

23. The College will:
- Monitor through the Research Committee and the REF Working Party that processes for developing research in each school are in place and properly implemented.

Research Grants

24. The College has been successful in attracting research grant funding in recent years; in 2009/10 Birkbeck academics were engaged in research grants costed at approximately £53 million. Research Grant income has increased by approximately 14% over the last three years.
25. In the light of the national economic position, it is likely that the overall amount of money available from research councils and other grant funders for research grants will depreciate in real terms over the period, with greater concentration of research funding on fewer institutions. Birkbeck aims to maintain its funding levels over the period, notwithstanding this likely decrease.
26. The key objectives in relation to research grants are:
- To maintain the level of grant income received across the College during the period covered by this Strategy;
 - To increase the number of research grant applications made by each department by 5%, while at least retaining the proportion of applications funded at the current level.
 - To increase the number of staff holding research grants across the College by 5% across the period covered by this Strategy.
27. In order to achieve this objective individual staff will:
- Seek to develop, either as principal investigator or co-investigator, at least two grant applications during the period covered by this Strategy;
 - Engage, where appropriate, with mentors and other senior academic staff of the department and school and the Research Grants and Contracts Office to identify opportunities for research grant funding.
28. Schools / departments will:
- Consider processes with which to provide incentives to staff for submitting research grant applications, such as teaching remission or sabbatical schemes, or personal research accounts;
 - Develop strategies to support staff in the development of research grant applications; these include mentoring schemes such as those referred to in paragraph 20;
 - Set up discipline-based procedures for scrutiny of all prospective grant applications, aiming at improving their quality and likelihood of success and reducing the chances of 'blacklisting' in research council schemes;
 - Consider the establishment of funds to act as "seedcorn" funding for the development of research grant applications.

29. Professional Services will:
- Develop further and publicise workshop programmes in liaison with research grant providers to support staff in development of research grant applications [Research Grants & Contracts Office].
30. The College will:
- develop the role of, and provide support to, Assistant School Managers (Research) in relation to the management of research grants.

Research Students

31. Research students play a key role in the research environment of departments, schools and the College. The College aims to maximise the numbers of research students enrolled, to support the research training undertaken within departments and schools and to play a full part in the development of the next generation of internationally recognised scholars.
32. The College is implementing a number of initiatives to further the development of an environment that delivers a high quality student experience to our researchers. The College Graduate Research School has undergone a review to clarify its objectives and structures, and the College has established a Research Student Sub-Committee to consider regulation, policy and procedure in relation to research students.
33. The College is mindful of the need to ensure submission rates of 60% or more for its research students, both in view of research council and other external agency requirements, but also as an indicator of the success of the College in supporting and developing its research students.
34. The College's objective is to increase the number of research students by 10% across the period covered by this Strategy, while maintaining submission rates above 60% within 4 years (full-time) / 7 years (part-time) across the College.
35. To support this objective, schools and departments will:
- Aim for all academic staff to act as first or second supervisor for at least one research student throughout the period of the Strategy;
 - Implement procedures for increasing availability of scholarships, teaching assistantships and other forms of student financial support;
 - Develop, in liaison with External Relations, strategies for publicising research programmes within the department and school concerned;
 - Adopt processes to ensure that, where supervisors are not in a position to act for further students because of their supervisory load, enquiries are referred elsewhere in the College with a view to ensuring that all options are considered before rejecting the application
 - Develop strong procedures for monitoring of student progress, including robust upgrade procedures and clear and timely action to terminate the registration of students who are not making satisfactory progress by the end of their first year of full time or second year of part time study;
 - Ensure continuing quality of supervision offered to students by (i) implementing appropriately the College policy that all students should have two supervisors with clearly understood roles; (ii) ensuring that inexperienced supervisors receive appropriate training and are paired with experienced supervisors until they have brought one PhD to successful completion;

- Ensure that departments monitor on a regular basis the progress of all their research students, with reports received and acted upon at school level.
36. Professional Services will:
- Consider the development of generic publicity for research students, emphasising the distinctiveness of research as opposed to taught postgraduate study, including a new postgraduate research prospectus [External Relations];
 - Develop research training programmes to support schools and departments in the delivery of skills training, utilising opportunities to develop joint training programmes with other Colleges of the Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network [College Graduate Research School];
 - Investigate the development of further links between employers and PhD students, including provision of careers advice and the pursuit of research objectives in collaboration with employers [Business Relations].
37. The College will
- Review the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Training and Research;
 - Establish a new Annual Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes, with a view to sharing good practice between departments and schools and identifying issues for consideration at departmental, school and institutional level;
 - Monitor the PGR recruitment and submission data of all schools;
 - Ensure that attention is paid in promotion panels to the performance of applicants in relation to research student supervision.

Impact of Research / Knowledge Transfer

38. The College explicitly states, in its Mission, that it will “make available the results of research, and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate.”
39. In addition, the College aims to maximise its performance in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework. The Higher Education Funding Council for England has confirmed that the assessment methodology for the REF will include a measurement of the impact of the College’s research; this will form a significant part of the overall assessment for each submitted unit of assessment.
40. The College’s objectives therefore in relation to impact and knowledge transfer are that:
- Each school should establish a clear strategy in relation to the impact of research, for example by establishing objectives in relation to impact upon government policy, commercial applications, impact on other research or other discipline-specific indicators.
 - The College should increase the total value of contracts (excluding VAT) generated by the College from the commercialisation and knowledge transfer of its research outcomes by 15% across the period covered by this Strategy.
41. To support this objective, individual staff will:
- Liaise with Business Relations when preparing any research grant application, and during the progress of any research grant, to discuss the development of an impact statement, and to consider what opportunities exist for collaboration with external organisations and agencies to enhance the impact of their research;

- Wherever possible, have consultancy projects they win contracted through Birkbeck;
- Notify their School Executive, Business Relations and External Relations of consultancy work undertaken on behalf of the College, for recording on the College's "Experts Database" and the College website where appropriate and to ensure that such work is taken into account when developing "Impact Statements";
- Endeavour to make contact with representatives of external organisations through attendance at conferences and networking events to explore where collaboration might be possible.

42. Schools /departments will:

- Develop impact strategies, approved and monitored by School Research Committees, establishing objectives in relation to impact upon government policy, commercial applications, impact on other research or other discipline-specific indicators;
- Incentivise knowledge transfer activities through any policy for income distribution;
- Include experience in undertaking knowledge transfer in the person specification of job descriptions for academic posts where appropriate;
- Consider the appointment or nomination of an academic Knowledge Transfer Co-ordinator to help develop processes to facilitate knowledge transfer.

43. Professional Services will:

- Work with individuals, schools and departments to consider, for each research grant application and approved research grant, opportunities for commercialisation and liaison with external organisations and agencies [Business Relations];
- Develop the College "Experts Database" and other sources of College information and publicity to ensure an accurate record of consultancy work undertaken within the College and to help increase the amount of this work offered to staff of the College [Business Relations / External Relations];
- Manage the contracts and agreements for knowledge transfer activities in order to build sustainable partnerships, including those with UCLB and UCLC [Business Relations];
- Maintain an Intellectual Property register and consider publishing a webpage detailing the College's invention disclosures & patents [Business Relations].

44. The College will:

- Ensure that undertaking knowledge transfer is recognised and rewarded in applications made by academics for promotion;
- Consider the appointment of a knowledge transfer / impact specialist within the Business Relations Unit, funded from HEIF funds, to liaise with schools in the development of knowledge transfer work and with External Relations for publicity purposes.

Dissemination of Research

45. In addition to the objectives relating to the quality of research, the College is also committed to disseminating the results of this research; the College's mission states that one of the College's principal aims is to "Make available the results of research, and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate."

46. The primary focus for dissemination has traditionally been by interaction between researchers and the wider community through a variety of means, such as conference attendance, work with public and private sector organisations or the publication of research outputs in discipline specific publications.
47. In addition the College has access to a range of media including the internet, College publications and access to national press and publications. As national priorities emphasise the need for research to impact upon society the College's strategy will aim to both increase the impact of its research and also enable the College to demonstrate this impact through various publicity channels in partnership with External Relations.
48. To support the objective of improving the dissemination of research within and outside the academic community, individual staff will:
- Continue to produce short summaries of each research grant application in layman's terms, as required by research councils, to enable relevant non-academic departments to support the dissemination of research results;
 - Pro-actively inform the Communications team within External Relations of any research that may be of interest beyond the discipline;
 - Consider the use of any dissemination budget contained within research grants to help publicise research findings in a number of ways, such as engaging freelance, specialist support for the purpose of developing copy to publicise the output from the research project in question
 - Seek to make publications more available in their original format through direct links on websites (where copyright allows)
49. Schools / departments will
- develop their websites to specifically incorporate a pages or pages on the impact of specific research projects undertaken by the school / department;
 - establish a named point of contact for research publicity in each school to help identify stories for dissemination.
50. Professional Services will:
- Seek to develop the College website to enable easy access to the results of College research [External Relations];
 - Proactively promote research projects and their research to national and broadcast media outlets [External Relations];
 - improve internal and external awareness of the national media coverage achieved by the College by putting the updated information on the Birkbeck website and in *Birkbeck Matters*, the staff newspaper [External Relations];
 - ensure liaison between External relations and the Research Grants Office to access the non-specialist information that academic staff prepare as part of their research grant applications;
 - engage freelance, specialist support to 'translate' research articles for the mainstream media, using funds made available through dissemination budgets where possible [External Relations];
 - redevelop the *Research at Birkbeck* area of the College's website to provide a 'taster' of the range of research conducted at Birkbeck by bringing together all research stories from that main news site and from *BBK Magazine* over the past year. This research area will also aim to drive web visitors to the research areas on each school site for additional research information [External Relations];

- Investigate the development of new technologies, such as podcasts, to use in conjunction with the College website to support the dissemination of research [External Relations / Media Services Centre].
- Ensure the effective development of the College website to support research [External Relations]

PROJECTS TO SUPPORT STRATEGY

PROJECT	DETAIL	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBILITY
Project 1: Review and Development of Staffing Strategies	All schools to review staffing in each department, identify where there is not research leadership by senior members of staff with strong research profiles in each subject area and formulate staffing plans to address	January 2011 in accordance with School strategy / planning cycle, reporting Summer 2011	School Executives, reporting to the Strategic Planning Committee
Project 2: Staff Survey	Human Resources department to oversee a Staff Survey with a view to identifying institutional barriers to attracting high quality staff to the College	2010-11 reporting Autumn 2011	Human Resources reporting to the Research Committee
Project 3: REF Dry Run	The College to implement a review of outputs and institutional preparations for the Research Excellence Framework	2010-11 reporting Summer 2011	REF Working Group / REF Support Group reporting to the Research Committee
Project 4: Development of the College Institutional Repository	The Library and schools / departments to liaise to develop the Institutional Repository to facilitate storage of publication details and publications where necessary	2010-11 reporting Spring 2011	Library reporting to the REF Working Group
Project 5: Support and Training for Assistant School Managers (Research)	Development and delivery of a programme of training and support for Assistant School Managers (Research) clarifying the expectations of the role and providing training and other support events	2010-11 reporting Summer 2011	Human Resources in liaison with Schools, reporting to the Research Committee
Project 6: Review of research studentship provision	Review provision of studentship schemes, agreed in 2009/10, to support the recruitment and retention of research students	2010-11 reporting Summer 2011	School Executives reporting to the Research Student Sub-Committee
Project 7: Review of Postgraduate Research Student Code of Practice	Review and update the College's Code of Practice for the Degrees of PhD and MPhil	2010-11 reporting Summer 2011	Research Student Sub-Committee
Project 8: Development of Impact Strategies	Schools to develop impact strategies, monitored and approved by School Research Committees, establishing objectives in relation to impact upon Government policy, commercial applications, impact on other research or other discipline-specific indicators	2010-11, reporting Autumn 2011	School Research Committees reporting to School Executives
Project 9: Development of Experts Database	Business Relations to develop the College's Experts Database and other sources of College information and publicity to	2010-11, reporting Summer 2011	Business Relations reporting to the Research Committee

	ensure an accurate record of consultancy work undertaken within the College and to help increase the amount of this work offered to staff of the College		
Project 10: Development of College website to support research	Development of College website to support research and the marketing of results of research grants	2010-11, reporting Spring 2011	External Relations reporting to the Research Committee
Project 11: Provision of specialist support to provide media copy	Investigate the engagement of freelance, specialist support to support the publication of the outcomes of research grants, particularly through the use of dissemination funds from research grants	2010-11, reporting Summer 2011	External Relations, in liaison with Schools, reporting to the Research Committee
Project 12: Publicity and recruitment of research students	Look at the recruitment processes for research students and determine appropriate interventions to support and boost recruitment, including the development of appropriate web sites and print material	2011-12, reporting Summer 2012	Birkbeck Graduate Research School in liaison with External Relations