

**NEWMAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
**RESEARCH STRATEGY (2008-2012)**

**1. CONTEXT**

The College's Research and Scholarship Strategy has been updated to reflect the increasing emphasis that the College is placing upon research. The development of the current Research Strategy was influenced by the publication of College's Strategic Plan 2007-2010 and the recent decision to grant the College the taught degree-awarding powers and university college status. The College is in a context of change and development; this includes innovations in teaching and learning, technological change, the adherence to external quality assurance systems, and response to national and local issues. In order to respond to these changes, the College has reviewed many of its strategies to position itself for an exciting and challenging future as a University College.

**2. RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

The College's Strategic Plan 2007-2010 stated that Newman will develop a vibrant culture for the development and enhancement of scholarship and research across all its activities. To this end Newman University College will:

- Encourage all staff to reach the highest possible levels of achievement in their field
- Actively recruit new academic staff who have doctoral level qualifications and potential for scholarly work as well as a commitment to teaching
- Seek to increase the amount of externally generated income for applied research projects
- Ensure that research and scholarship underpin all aspects of learning and teaching
- Develop students as researchers and to encourage further study
- Build and develop a research centre for work with young people, children and families.

**3. THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP STRATEGY 2008-2012**

- Continue to broaden the base of research active staff across all areas of academic activity;
- Ensure that the physical and administrative infrastructure for research and scholarship continues to improve;
- Support staff participating in research and scholarly activities through the development of an inclusive culture and supportive environment;
- Support the achievement of research excellence through focused growth, collaboration and development of applied research across the College and, where appropriate, with external partners;
- Work towards developing opportunities to secure external sources of research funding that will expand the range of current research activities;

- Develop the research students' community, increase the number of Newman PhD Studentships and the taught postgraduate courses, and extend expertise to enable suitably qualified academic staff to engage in postgraduate research supervision.

#### **4. THE CURRENT SITUATION**

- 4.1 The research conducted in Newman University College is varied due to the diverse interests of subject staff. Published research has both subject specific and applied elements. In recent years, staff publications have increased in volume and quality; this has included books, chapters in edited books, articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, articles in professional journals, published conference papers, articles in on-line journals, poster and oral presentations at national and international conferences. Additionally, in 2007 the College published the first edition of the student journal *Critical Commentary* which included research articles written by Newman University College students in collaboration with members of staff.
- 4.2 There is a wide range of funding sources available to staff within different internal funding schemes. These provide support for conference attendance, for conference presentations and research degree study. It is encouraging that the number of applications to present research findings in conferences and similar events has increased significantly over the last two years. In 2007, there were 23 conference papers presented by Newman University College staff.
- 4.3 A number of measures have been taken to bring about a significant change in the profile of research and scholarship and to ensure that scholarship is embedded in the curriculum. These measures included a substantial increase in the resources available to support staff scholarly activities through a range of appropriate schemes to encourage and facilitate staff research and scholarship. It is now the usual practice to include both a higher degree and a record of research and publication, or at least demonstrable potential in this area, in the person specification for all new academic appointments, including those from the professional community. Currently around twenty five per cent of the academic staff have PhDs with a further eighteen registered for doctoral awards. The proportion of staff holding a higher degree is over seventy per cent. Funding towards the cost of further academic study is offered through an annual bidding process managed by the Research Committee. Where possible, such staff are also supported with some study leave, usually at the point of writing up. Currently, a number of the University College staff are regularly involved as reviewers of academic and professional journals in their subject specialisation; several of them are members of editorial boards of subject specialist journals.
- 4.4 The strategic partnership with the University of Leicester has contributed to improving the research culture at Newman University College. Several members of staff are now enrolled on doctoral programmes with Leicester. The association with Leicester has also proved fruitful for those staff who are further along the research route. Recently, twelve members of the University College staff were accepted by the University as eligible to supervise doctoral students within the disciplines of Education, English, Geography, History, Theology, Psychology and Sports Studies. The University College will seek to increase the number of potential supervisors as staff meet the necessary criteria. In addition, a number

of postgraduate programmes have been introduced in collaboration with the University of Leicester. Staff have also been involved in collaborative research projects such as the TDA funded literature review into the experiences of Teaching Assistants in Schools.

- 4.5 The University College is endeavouring to build its reputation for the supervision of students at postgraduate level. Currently several members of staff are involved in the supervision and support of students for MPhil, EdD and PhD degrees. A further fourteen members of staff are currently involved in teaching postgraduate students registered for the Master Taught degree programme (MEd). The College has recently awarded three PhD studentships in Education, Psychology and Sports Studies for the period of 2007-2010.
- 4.6 In recent years the University College has pledged its firm intention to pursue a strategy which would place a stronger emphasis on research and developing its research culture and profile. Allocated time is agreed between individual members of staff and their Heads of Subject or line manager, taking into account teaching and other commitments. An application to the Research Committee needs to be supported by the Head of Subject or line manager based on previously identified needs through the annual staff appraisal process and has clear and measurable targets to be achieved. These targets are linked to the overall University College research strategy objectives.
- 4.7 Newman University College's Research Committee operates a Small Grants scheme. These are awarded to support research, scholarship and creative activity by members of staff. Sums of up to a maximum of £750 are made available to subject areas, research groups or individuals. A total of ten awards are allocated annually to encourage members of staff to pursue small-scale research projects individually or as a group. This allocation is based on a competitive bidding process.
- 4.8 The University College has also introduced a scheme of negotiated sabbatical support for staff. Three sabbaticals of half a term (maximum of 6 weeks) are awarded annually to members of staff who are in their final stages of completing a higher degree (e.g., MPhil, EdD, PhD). The Head of Subject or line manager approves the application which must identify clear and measurable targets to be achieved at the end of the sabbatical period. These targets are normally identified through the staff appraisal process and have direct links to the University College research strategy. The Director of Research has the responsibility for organising regular staff research seminars; these have been very successful over the last two years and have tended to attract a significant number of staff across all departments and programmes.
- 4.9 In line with academic conventions in Higher Education, an appropriate and effective procedure for ethical approval of research projects by staff and students has been developed. The University College now requires that all research by staff and students involving human participants, animals or human tissue must obtain prior ethical approval. The University College Ethics Committee has the responsibility for reviewing the ethical aspects of research proposals, including work-based projects, undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations. The Committee is guided by professional codes of conduct and general University College principles of ethical research with human subjects. The work of the Ethics Committee has been systematically reviewed over time.

4.10 The Academic Board and Governing Body approved in 2004-05 a scheme for the appointment of University College Professors and Readers. This scheme draws on best practice across the sector and, as might be expected, involves not only internal judgements but external advice and references. The title of Reader may be conferred on an eligible member of academic staff where he or she has shown distinction in research. Two members of staff have so far been awarded personal Chairs.

4.11 The Research Committee has approved in 2006-07 a scheme for awarding the status of Newman Visiting Professors and Fellows. Three Visiting Professors and one Visiting Fellow were awarded to distinguished scholars with further nominations being considered. The Visiting Professors play a pivotal role in developing the research and scholarship potential of staff through appropriate forms of advice, training and support. They are also involved in providing continuing professional development for staff and disseminating the University College's research and scholarship activities in the wider academic community. The University College plans to expand the number of Visiting Professors in order to extend these benefits to other academic areas.

## **5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The University College will continue developing and strengthening an intellectual environment in which research and scholarship contribute to excellence in teaching and learning. The University College will support research which benefits the communities with which it interacts, for example, by improving educational practice, by developing the expertise of school teachers through its postgraduate programmes, or by liaising with regional and national bodies, such as government agencies or departments, to address relevant issues.

The following objectives will be the focus of the current research strategy:

- Contribute to strengthening the knowledge base underpinning teaching and learning through research and scholarship and to disseminate this effectively
- Encourage excellence in research which contributes to excellence in learning and teaching and enhance the University College's contribution to the local, regional, and wider communities
- Ensure that the University College's research continues to inform and enhance its teaching activities
- Develop a strong research culture across schools and subject areas and encourage collaborative research where appropriate
- Promote the development of pedagogical and applied research across all subjects
- Strengthen the research base by increasing numbers of postgraduate research students
- Increase and diversify external funding for research
- Recruit, motivate and retain research active staff

- Introduce formal procedures to encourage and reward research activity

## **6. RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND TEACHING**

The planned increase in research and scholarly activity is intended to serve the purpose of contributing to excellence in teaching and learning by ensuring that staff are at the forefront of their area of expertise and fostering an environment where scholarship and awareness of appropriate intellectual contexts are valued. The University College attempts to create a positive research environment to maximise the potential of staff. Academic staff should be supported in a way that allows them to concentrate on the core activities of teaching and research. This means working towards establishing an optimum ratio of academics to support staff and ensuring that non core tasks are delegated where possible. In recognition of the importance of research and scholarship, the University College has significantly increased the budget allocated for staff research over the past two years and has agreed to maintain this level of funding for the forthcoming year with a view of further enhancement in subsequent years. The planned increase in research funding might enable the University College to offer a number of new research studentships in specific subject areas to enhance their capacity to develop research and scholarship.

## **7. COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH**

The University College encourages partnership and collaborative research with fellow academics and public and voluntary services on a range of issues including health, education and community and professional development. It recognises the need for incentives to be built into the systems to achieve an increase in the number of collaborations to the wider benefit of research. These collaborations could be initiated within a subject area, across subjects or beyond the institution's boundaries. In 2007, the Research Committee took the initiative to publish the first edition of the student journal *Critical Commentary* to encourage students to publish their own work and to support collaborative projects between students and staff.

## **8. SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES**

- Strengthen current research activity and expertise within subject areas and schools and encourage the creation of new research groups
- Heads of subjects to ensure that members of the academic staff in the early stages of their career have support and training and sufficient time embedded in their work plan to enable them to develop their research appropriately
- The University College will seek ways of ensuring that within the portfolio of activity, research and teaching are appropriately balanced. Subject areas will review teaching activities to ensure that members of staff have sufficient time for both research and teaching.
- Explore possible collaborative scholarly activities, including joint publications, across subject areas and schools
- Target setting in terms of research and scholarship at subject and school level
- Develop and extend appropriate research collaboration both nationally and internationally with other research groups in other educational institutions

- Establish a research database of staff in each subject area
- Increase the central budget available to support research, including the research-leave fund
- Maintain and expand research volume across all schools and subjects
- Improve the quality of research
- Enhance induction and mentoring processes for early career research appointments
- Invest strategically in new staff appointments to support institutional and school research priorities
- Enhance training for postgraduate research students
- Increase funding for study leave for academic staff
- Provide high-quality training in research or postgraduate research students
- Offer opportunities to staff to gain experience and knowledge of supervision at postgraduate level
- Ensure that staff disseminate the outcome of their research across the professional community

## **9. LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES**

- Recognise and reward excellence in research
- Make several strategic investments, including new Professorships
- Establish a thriving research culture supported by the institution
- Develop a growing community of postgraduates
- Provide opportunities for a term long study leave after every nine terms employment for those who have a viable research project to pursue and who have demonstrated a commitment to realising research goals
- Award of research contracts from government or businesses
- Management and support of research students in each subject
- Participate in future RAEs and extend the number of subject areas involved in this activity
- Work towards achieving research degree awarding power

## **10. STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

The focus of the research strategy will be on the development of the following three key areas:

### **10.1 Training and Staff Development**

- The issue of time for teaching and research needs to be addressed. Research time should be protected and given appropriate recognition in the staff overall workload
- Academic staff should have the opportunity to develop their research skills and research portfolio as part of staff development. The less research active staff should be encouraged to collaborate with more experienced colleagues as a form of research staff development
- Enable suitably qualified members of staff to gain experience in supervision of MPhil, PhD and EdD students by working with more experienced colleagues

- Use of staff development time and money for the development of research and scholarship by encouraging staff to publish in peer reviewed journals and present their work at conferences
- Encourage staff to publish individually or in collaboration with other members of staff as well as Masters and PhD students
- Organise staff research seminars to enhance appreciation of research through attendance and presenting
- Encourage and support staff to undertake higher research degrees as appropriate and to develop individuals' own ideas and interests
- Provide mentorship and support for staff in the process of publication
- Provide structured opportunities for staff to undertake research (Scholar's Week, research workshops)
- Offer staff the opportunity to participate in University of Leicester supervision training where appropriate.

## 10.2 Collaboration

- Promote opportunities for collaboration with partners across the University College, with LEA, and other public and private agencies.
- Facilitate all staff in undertaking research and scholarly activity that underpins the curriculum, advances the body of knowledge and challenges and enhances practice in collaboration with practitioners
- Encourage collaboration with other HE and FE institutions, particularly the University of Leicester and Bishop Grosseteste College
- Encourage joint supervision of postgraduate students with colleagues from other academic institutions
- Develop joint bids in partnerships (trusts, charities, other universities)

## 10.3 Funding of Research

- Internal funding directed to encourage group and collaborative research, to support pockets of good research that demonstrate the potential to evolve a creditable research profile and individuals who have an established track record in research.
- A more focused approach to gain external funding and further develop the capacity to produce grants applications. While perseverance, focus on own strengths, and attention to the quality of applications should improve the success rate, there is still a need to further increase the limited staff time available to support grant application. This, in turn, will provide the capacity to submit more proposals and to start to build self-sustaining research groups. The employment of a skilled and knowledgeable Business Development Manager will be important in supporting this aspect of work.
- In setting budgets, priority will be given to building up and maintaining capacity in areas of research that have or will have potential of evolving a national level research profile.

## **11. ACTION REQUIRED**

- Action plans for every school and subject area for developing a balanced and sustainable portfolio of activities to support their research and scholarly activity.
- Introduce mechanisms for providing incentives for individuals and subject areas to increase their research income.
- Consider the potential to achieve a good research profile as a key criterion in making new academic appointments.
- Recognise and reward excellence in research as an essential element to the success of the University College's mission.
- Review the research leave mechanisms to enable members of staff to focus exclusively on research for extended periods equivalent to at least one term in every 4-year cycle.
- Encourage use of external funds to buy in teaching, and plan courses to accommodate external input.
- Benchmark against other appropriate institutions and seek to learn from successes in others.
- Investigate the capacity to achieve research degree awarding power.

## **12. PROGRESS INDICATORS AND MILESTONES**

1. Increased number of quality publications in academic and professional journals
2. Increased number of paper presentations in national and international conferences
3. Increased number of staff with completed MPhil, EdD and PhD supervision
4. Increased number of staff hold doctoral level qualifications
5. Increased number of postgraduate students
6. Increased research income
7. Improvement to the quality and range of staff research seminars and workshops
8. Increased number of externally funded research projects
9. Impact of the scholarly activities on the local and wider communities
10. Research centre for work with young people, children and families built and opened by 2010

## **13. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The Research Committee will act as the Review Board of this strategy. On behalf of the Committee, the Director of Research will monitor progress in implementing the strategy and work closely with the Staff Development Coordinator to ensure equity of support to staff and research students and to achieve the overall objectives of the research strategy. To ensure that the Research Strategy remains a live document the Research Committee will review the action plan annually with a view to the appropriateness of the actions and time lines in addition to monitoring the implementation process.

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