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# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028 FOR RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

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# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2 The Rationale of the Strategic Plan for Research</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3 The Vision, Mission, and Aims for Research at the University</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>4 Strategic Objectives for Research at the University</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5 The Framework for Research at the University</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>6 The ‘Contents’ Dimension of the <i>Strategic Plan for Research</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
6.1 Contents Focus 1: Research Environment, People, and Culture .....	<b>12</b>
6.2 Contents Focus 2: Research Outputs, Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding .....	<b>13</b>
6.3 Contents Focus Three: Engagement in, and Impact of, Research .....	<b>13</b>
<b>7 The ‘Levels’ Dimension of the <i>Strategic Plan for Research</i></b> .....	<b>14</b>
7.1 The University Level .....	<b>14</b>
7.2 The Faculty Level .....	<b>15</b>
7.3 The Individual Academic Staff Member Level .....	<b>17</b>
<b>8 The ‘Time’ Dimension of the <i>Strategic Plan for Research</i></b> .....	<b>18</b>
8.1 Phase 1: Year One .....	<b>18</b>
8.2 Phase 2: Years Two to Four .....	<b>20</b>
8.3 Phase 3: Year Five .....	<b>21</b>
<b>9 Action Planning for the <i>Strategic Plan for Research</i></b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>10 Concluding remarks</b> .....	<b>25</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The development of research at the University of Saint Joseph operates at different levels and in different ways, hence, its planning is designed to ensure that it fits, serves, and enacts the University's *Framework for Research* set out below. The *Strategic Plan for Research 2023-2028* (hereafter abbreviated to *Strategic Plan for Research*) is designed to serve the University's vision, mission, Strategic Plan, policies, and stakeholders, internal and external, at strategic, tactical, and operational levels, and research has a significant part to play in this. This *Strategic Plan for Research* deliberately emulates the layout and structure of the University's *Road Map*, where appropriate.

The University's stated vision refers to research thus: *'[t]o be a leading multicultural Catholic University of China, that stands by the principles of academic integrity, follows international standards in higher education, fosters innovation and upholds humanizing values in all cultures'*. Its mission, referring to research, states that the University seeks to *'uphold the highest academic standards in teaching, learning and research'*.

In the University's *Road Map*, its first Strategic Objective, which is *'to uphold the highest International academic standards'*, includes two statements that refer to research:

- 1.2 Adopt the highest standards and best practices in all academic activities, including but not limited to teaching, learning and research.*
- 1.6 Set up, with other HEIs, a peer benchmarking system, partnership in research, joint programmes and mobility projects.*

In the University's *Road Map*, its third Strategic Objective, which is to *'nurture the commitment to a sustainable society'* includes two statements that refer to research:

- 3.1 Promote environmental sustainability in the context of teaching, learning, research, public engagement and other activities on and off campus.*
- 3.3. Research and introduce in programme curricula the *Global Goals for Sustainable Development* adopted by the United Nations, which link social and environmental objectives;*

In the University's *Road Map*, its fourth Strategic Objective, which is to *'foster social development rooted in the traditions of Macao'* includes a statement that refers to research:

- 3.4 Introduce innovative programmes and research projects that directly address the social, cultural and ethical needs of Macao and improve the wellbeing of individuals and the community.*

In the University's *Road Map*, its fifth Strategic Objective, which is to *'promote internationalization, as a core value proposition'* includes a statement that refers to research:

- 5.7 Develop joint research centres, joint research projects and research networks that promote the cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries*

*through Macao.*

In the University's *Road Map*, its sixth Strategic Objective, which is to '*promote whole-person development and institutional accountability*' includes a statement that refers to research:

*6.2 Research and adopt best practices in management of human resources, furthering the well-being of staff and students and striking a healthy balance between the professional and private lives of all.*

The University's *Policy for Research* states that, in keeping with the University's vision and mission, its research must serve '*the local community, the wider society, and the research community at all levels, by the creation, production, conduct, reporting, dissemination, uptake, and impact of knowledge discovered and reported through research. The University is committed to excellence in research in all its fields of work, based on the highest international standards, and to promoting actively the important role of research in its teaching and learning.*' In accomplishing this, the University, in the same *Policy for Research*, recognises that it '*has a responsibility to support, promote, conduct, and disseminate high quality, ethically defensible research*' in intent and conduct, and that '*the research work of the University serves and promotes the safety, wellbeing, humanity, and development of individuals, communities, societies, and those involved in the research, in accordance with the mission, vision, and values of the University*'. This accords with the University's mission, vision, values, and strategic planning.

The University's *Strategic Plan for Research* includes, *inter alia*, planning, implementing, monitoring, reviewing, evaluating, and continuously improving the scope and quality of its research. In so doing, it recognises the high level of demand that this document places upon its users in each Faculty.<sup>1</sup> To address this, and to attend to realism and USJ's current position with regard to research development, it sets out a phased approach to developing its range of research work, projects, and activities, indicated below. The University has taken many active steps to develop its research culture, projects, operations, and output. This is already bringing many positive outcomes. As it develops its research and processes of ensuring that research in the University meets high standards, it recognises that this takes time to install, develop and change practices, to become embedded in the institution, and to review and address necessary refocusing of its research planning, directions, and contents.<sup>2</sup> The *Strategic Plan for Research*, then includes an important time components, and, in so doing it recognises that emergent issues, successes, and challenges impact on the nature, direction, focus, speed and management of developments in a vast range of aspect of research work and activities.

The *Strategic Plan for Research* in the University has three main dimensions:

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, the term 'Faculty' is used as a shorthand for each academic unit, that includes each Faculty, School, Department, Institute, Research Centre, Observatory, and otherwise named academic and/or research unit.

<sup>2</sup> This is informed by the *Stages of Concern* of Hall & Hord (2011) in ensuring effective innovations. Hall, G. E. & Hord, S. M. (2011) *Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles and Potholes (third edition)*. Pearson.

- **The 'contents' dimension:** the main *areas of focus* in the development, implementation, and evaluation of research and research activities in the *Strategic Plan for Research*.
- **The 'levels' dimension:** The main *levels of operation* of the *Strategic Plan for Research* (University, Faculty, Individual Academic Staff Member on the Academic or Research Track<sup>3</sup>).
- **The 'time' dimension:** the timeline of *stages* of the *Strategic Plan for Research*.

Each of these is addressed below. How these are addressed in subsequent action planning is also introduced below (Section 9).

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<sup>3</sup> Hereafter abbreviated to 'Individual Staff Member'.

## 2 THE RATIONALE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH

The rationale for this *Strategic Plan for Research* has six features:

1. The need for clear principles, purposes, priorities, agendas, and directions in the research work of the University.
2. The need to ensure workable, manageable contents and operations of the research work of the University.
3. The need for constructive alignment of the *Strategic Plan for Research* with the University's *Mission, Vision, Strategic Plan, Policy for Research, Quality Assurance for Research, and Framework for Research*, and with the University's values and identity that are indicated in those documents.
4. The need to ensure that this constructive alignment operates at the University, Faculty, and Individual Staff Member levels.
5. The need to rationalise and operationalise the development and maintenance of research at the University.
6. The need to ensure comprehensive and manageable coverage and development of key areas of research work, its quality and operations, across the University.

## 3 THE VISION, MISSION, AND AIMS FOR RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY

To address the University's *Mission, Vision, Road Map, and Policy for Research*, the vision of the *Strategic Plan for Research* is:

*To be the leading Catholic University in South-East Asia in its local, regional, national, and international research and their outcomes, uptake, impact, and consequences.*

To address the University's *Mission, Vision, Strategic Plan, and Policy for Research*, the mission of the *Strategic Plan for Research* is:

*To foster and promote excellence in research and a research culture, at the forefront of knowledge, enabling research to empower and transform researchers, peoples, communities, and societies with diverse backgrounds, identities, and nationalities.*

The *Strategic Plan for Research*, to address the University's *Mission, Vision, Road Map, and Policy for Research*, has five aims:

1. To clarify, promote, facilitate, guide, and set out the University's expectations of, the research work of the University.
2. To identify and set out the research directions, imperatives, principles, agendas, priorities, and actions for promoting impactful research in the University.
3. To operationalise, achieve, and sustain research excellence, at the forefront of knowledge, in the University's research work, operations, contents, outputs, and impact.

4. To promote and sustain thriving research cultures and environments in all the academic units of the University.
5. To operationalise, promote, secure, and sustain the rich engagement of the University's academics in all types of research, its output, and its impact on, and consequences for, stakeholders.

These aims are addressed at University, Faculty, and Individual Staff Member levels. Hence, an early, initial task (Phase 1: in the first year of this *Strategic Plan for Research*) for Faculties in developing their research plans must include a statement of aims and Strategic Objectives for their Faculty's research, which are aligned to these five research aims.

## 4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY

There are five Strategic Objectives in this *Strategic Plan for Research*, each one of which has four *Actionable Steps*.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

To support and sustain the development, widening scope, and ground-breaking nature of research in each academic unit of the University.

#### **Actionable Steps**

- 1.1 Ensure that funding is provided for research projects by internal and outside sources.
- 1.2 Increase the research training provision, opportunity, quality of researchers at the University, and quality assurance and monitoring at each level of the *Strategic Plan for Research*.
- 1.3 Increase support for conference attendance and presentations.
- 1.4 Systematise the provision, eligibility, operation, and review of research leave for all academic staff.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: QUALITY AND IMPACT

To conduct and disseminate research of diverse types, that have externally recognised excellence, significance, and high impact on the local community, the wider society, and the research community at all levels and regions of the world.

#### **Actionable Steps**

- 2.1 Install internal formal and informal monitoring and review of research proposals, project implementation and outcomes (including impact), implementation, and outcomes at Faculty level, and that the internal and external quality assurance requirements in research operate and are consequential at University, Faculty, and Individual Staff Member levels.
- 2.2 Provide, support, and incentivise opportunities for high-quality and high-impact research to be undertaken and managed at University, Faculty, and Individual Staff Member levels.
- 2.3 Increase the networking, cooperation, and collaborative research that takes place across institutions of higher education and research, together with liaison with local,

regional, and national groups for developing and acting on research development and implementation, research outputs, and research consequences.

- 2.4 Ensure that strategies and actions for dissemination, uptake, impact, and outcomes are built into research proposal.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: RESEARCH CULTURE**

To develop and sustain a rich and inclusive research culture and environment in all the academic units of the University.

#### ***Actionable Steps***

- 3.1 Ensure that each Faculty has operational plans for providing and operating a wide spectrum of regular and occasional research-related activities in each Faculty, which promote inclusivity in participating in research, and develop and sustain a productive research culture and environment.
- 3.2 Ensure that Research Coordinators in each Faculty activate fully the University's '*Suggestions for Faculties/School/Institutes/Centres and Research Coordinators at the University of Saint Joseph*'.
- 3.3 Promote, activate, and implement within-Faculty, cross-Faculty, cross-department, and cross-institution research projects and activities.
- 3.4 Provide funding, uptake, and impact of support for the development of activities and resources that promote a positive, high-quality, and diverse research culture and environment across the University and its academic units.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF**

To increase and maximise the number of, and output from, 'research active' members of each academic unit of the University.

#### ***Actionable Steps***

- 4.1 Conduct, review, and act on the consequences of, a situational analysis of research activity and 'research active' members of each academic unit, and plan at the unit level for consequent action for each academic member of staff to increase and develop their research profile and activities.
- 4.2 Ensure that each academic member of staff includes in their annual appraisal a report on, and review of, research projects submitted and started, in progress, and completed in that academic year and their quality and outputs, together with their involvement in research activities and outputs and publications (which feature in appraisal), events, training and staff development in the Faculty and the University (as appropriate) and their own research plans for the following academic year.
- 4.3 Ensure that each Faculty member takes part in a stated minimum number of research-related activities and events in the Faculty, the University, and outside the University.
- 4.4 Install a programme of semester-based research seminars in each Faculty, together with each Faculty-agreed annual minimum of Faculty-organised events, for example: conference/symposium/workshop/roundtable/seminar/lecture/presentation series.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: FORWARD PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure that action planning and implementation for developing research at the University, Faculty, and Individual Staff Member levels, is efficacious and effective.

### **Actionable Steps**

- 5.1 Install a University Research Committee of the Senate, to consider, review, plan, promote, draft of strategic documents related to research, and have oversight of, research at the University, and to review and act on the strategic planning of the University's research work.
- 5.2 Ensure that each Faculty has an operational and operating, quinquennial strategic plan for research, and triennial tactical, action plan for research, together with ongoing monitoring, review, and evaluation for all aspects of its research work, research projects, research outcomes and impact, research culture and environment, and research training and inclusion.
- 5.3 Ensure that all academic members of staff adhere to, and meet, the administrative, proposal-related, workflow-related, reporting-related requirements for funded and non-funded research, required by the relevant administrative offices of the University and of outside parties and offices.
- 5.4 Ensure that each Faculty meets the evidence-based, indicator-linked, and criterion-referenced requirements of quality assurance, quality enhancement, and excellence in all aspects of its research work.

## 5 THE FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY

The University's *Framework for Research* is used here for organising the *Strategic Plan for Research*. A separate document of the *Framework for Research* sets it out more fully; here, some of its distinguishing features and components are presented, so that there is an alignment between the *Framework for Research* and the *Strategic Plan for Research*.

The *Framework for Research* does not seek to be exhaustive in its detail. Rather, it is rationalisation and organization of key components of research work in the University, including, for example:

- The scope, kinds, types, and scale of research work, projects, activities, events
- The leadership and management of research
- The products and outcomes of research
- Responsibilities for research work
- The dissemination, uptake, impact, and consequences of research, i.e. making research consequential
- Developing a research culture in the University, Faculty, and Individual staff members
- Promoting and supporting research environments
- Resourcing research
- Assuring and ensuring quality and quality enhancement of research
- Networking for research and dissemination

These are only illustrations of the scope of 'research work'. To gain some purchase on the gamut of issues in, and scope of research and research work, the University document has rationalised its *Strategic Plan for Research* into three key *dimensions*:

- **Dimension One:** content areas:
  - i. *Research environment, people, and culture*
  - ii. *Research outputs, contribution to knowledge*
  - iii. *Engagement in, and impact of, research*
- **Dimension Two:** levels of focus (University, Faculty, and Individual Academic Staff Member)
- **Dimension Three:** phases of development and implementation of research work (timing and duration).

This is admittedly and unavoidably reductionist; it does not seek to be exhaustively inclusive. Rather, it is used to organise key components and areas of action in research work, and such trimming down is intended to facilitate the operationalisation of research development, scoping, planning, implementation, practices, support in the University, and leadership and management of, and responsibilities for, high quality research.

## 6 THE 'CONTENTS' DIMENSION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH

The contents, foci, and procedures for research at the University should include:

1. A statement of the purposes, processes, targets, and intended outcomes of the research work at the University, and the rationale on which these are built.
2. An indication of the three main *areas of focus* for research work, activities, and development at the University:
  - i. *Research environment, people, and culture*
  - ii. *Research outputs, contribution to knowledge*
  - iii. *Engagement in, and impact of, research*

These three areas of focus take cognizance of the three phases (timing and duration) of development set out later in this document, i.e. the University recognises and respects the need for time for development and implementation to take place.

The background and pedigree of these *three areas of focus* reside in:

- the UK's *Research Excellence Framework* for 2021<sup>4</sup> which set out three areas: (1) *research outputs* (originality, significance, rigour, and advancement of the discipline); (2) *research impact* (reach, significance, and engagement); and (3) *research environment* (vitality and sustainability, including research culture).
- The metamorphosis of these respectively into three revised areas for the UK's proposed 2028 round of review:<sup>5</sup> (1) *contribution to knowledge and understanding* (formerly 'outputs'); (2) *engagement and impact* (formerly 'impact'); and (3) *people and culture* (formerly 'environment').

These form the basis of the areas of focus for the research work at the University, and its quality, at each of the three levels of the *Framework for Research* (University, Faculty, individual staff member) discussed below.

3. How to review and evaluate research work, and how to follow up on the outcomes of the review, drawing on evidence in developing and implementing strategies.
4. In considering research at all three levels, the main *areas of focus* are several, and these include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Alignment to the University's and the Faculty's mission, vision, strategic planning, values, and identity
  - ii. Research environment and culture
  - iii. Originality, significance, scale, scope, rigour, impact, insight, of research projects and outputs
  - iv. Context of research: institutional, local, regional, national, international
  - v. Fields of research

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<sup>4</sup> The 2021 UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) (<https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications-and-reports/panel-criteria-and-working-methods-201902/>) indicated this: (a) **Outputs**: The sub-panels will assess the quality of submitted research outputs in terms of their 'originality, significance and rigour', with reference to international research quality standards. This element will carry a weighting of **60 per cent** in the overall outcome awarded to each submission. (b) **Impact**: The sub-panels will assess the 'reach and significance' of impacts on the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life that were underpinned by excellent research conducted in the submitted unit. This element will carry a weighting of **25 per cent**. (c) **Environment**: The sub-panels will assess the research environment in terms of its 'vitality and sustainability', including the approach to enabling impact from its research, and its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. This element will carry a weighting of **15 per cent**.'

<sup>5</sup> For the 2028 UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), this is proposed to be: '1. **People and culture (25% weighting)**. This element replaces the environment element of REF 2014 and 2021 and will be expanded to include an assessment of research culture. Evidence to inform assessment of this element will be collected at both institutional level and at the level of disciplinary submissions. (2) **Contribution to knowledge and understanding (50% weighting)**. This element expands the outputs element of REF 2014 and 2021. The assessment will continue to be largely based on assessment of submitted outputs. In REF 2028, however, at least 10% of the score will be based on evidence of the broader contributions to the advancement of the discipline. (c) **Engagement and impact (25% weighting)**. This element replaces the impact elements of REF 2014 and 2021, although it is similar to the impact element of 2014. Submissions will consist of both impact case studies and an accompanying statement to evidence engagement and impact activity beyond case studies.'

- vi. Types, methodologies, and methods of research (e.g. empirical, non-empirical, theoretical, narrative, quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, experimental, survey, ethnographic, case study, action research, etc.)
- vii. Indicators of quality in research output
- viii. Data and records kept on a diverse range of research matters with regard to quality assurance and enhancement
- ix. Provision of support for research, e.g. financial, temporal, contractual, material, spatial, facilities, managerial
- x. Training and development provision and activities for research and researchers
- xi. Planning for, including, undertaking, assessing, evaluating, and improving the uptake and impact of research (e.g. reach, nature contents, significance), together with evidence of improvements to impact
- xii. Evaluating and approving research proposals
- xiii. Research ethics, risk analysis, and safeguarding
- xiv. Research staffing (expertise and fields) and technical support
- xv. Research networking and collaboration
- xvi. Linking researchers and stakeholders
- xvii. Overcoming barriers to engagement in, participation in research
- xviii. Identification of research needs
- xix. Research development plans and strategy
- xx. Monitoring and, where appropriate, increasing the number of research projects: funded and unfunded
- xxi. Monitoring and, where appropriate, increasing the number of doctoral/research students and staff
- xxii. Management and leadership of research

This 'contents' dimension's three main *areas of focus* ((i) *Research environment, people, and culture*; (ii) *Research outputs, contribution to knowledge*; (iii) *Engagement in, and impact of, research*) inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of research for this *Strategic Plan for Research*. Given the wide scope of research work issues set out above, the University recognises and respects the need for time for development and implementation to take place. The three main *areas of focus* are unpacked in the subsections below.

## **6.1 CONTENTS FOCUS 1: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE, AND CULTURE**

The University here follows the UK's *Research Excellence Framework* which writes that the research environment requires '*vitality and sustainability*', *including the approach to enabling impact from its research, and its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base*'. This includes, for example, considering:

- the provision of support for research, e.g. financial, temporal, contractual, material, spatial, facilities, managerial
- the training and development provision and activities for research and researcher, and their uptake and impact
- the evaluation of research staffing (expertise and fields) and technical support
- the identification of research and research development needs

- research development plans and strategy, attention to the number, nature, scope and manageability of research projects: funded and unfunded
- the development of doctoral/research students and staff
- the leadership and management of research
- in establishing the research culture, this looks at the range of research-related activities in each Faculty and across the University for promoting, understanding, and facilitating research and its dissemination.

The University's May 2023 document '*Suggestions for Faculties/School/Institutes/Centres and Research Coordinators at the University of Saint Joseph*' provides many ways in which the research environment and culture can be developed in each Faculty, including in the areas of: public events; publications and research outputs; record-keeping and updating; dissemination; notices; and funding. These can feature in developing research here.

## **6.2 CONTENTS FOCUS 2: RESEARCH OUTPUTS, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

This focuses on ensuring the excellence of the outputs and products of the research, and their contribution to a broad spectrum of areas and parties. The UK's Research Excellence Framework writes that the quality of the research outputs is assessed '*in terms of their originality, significance and rigour, with reference to international research quality standards*', and this includes, for example '*applied, practice, basic and strategic research*'. This is also informed by the UK *Research Excellence Framework's Annexe A* in its '*Panel criteria and working methods*' (2019).<sup>6</sup> High quality, excellent research has several features and areas of focus in ensure that they meet high standards, for example:

- the originality, significance, scale, scope, rigour, impact, insight, consequences of research projects and outputs
- the fields of the research
- the types of research (e.g. empirical, non-empirical, theoretical, narrative, 'pure' and 'applied research')
- the types, methodologies, and methods of research (e.g. empirical, non-empirical, theoretical, narrative quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, experimental, survey, ethnographic, case study, action research, etc.)
- keeping reliable and valid data and records on research
- ensuring, monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and reporting on the research ethics, risk analysis, and safeguarding in research projects and research training

## **6.3 CONTENTS FOCUS THREE: ENGAGEMENT IN, AND IMPACT OF, RESEARCH**

The UK's *Research Excellence Framework* writes that the impact of research addresses '*the reach and significance of impacts on the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life that were underpinned by excellent research conducted*'. At issue here is the recognition that the research must be impactful and consequential, i.e. it must make a positive and important difference to knowledge, living,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications-and-reports/panel-criteria-and-working-methods-201902/>

actions, people, society, policy etc. Engagement in, and impact of research and here takes into account and evaluates:

- the context of research: institutional, local, regional, national, international
- the planning for, including, undertaking, assessing, and evaluating uptake and impact of research (e.g. reach, nature contents, significance)
- evidence of impact
- research networking and collaboration
- linking researchers and stakeholders
- addressing how to overcome barriers to engagement and participation in research

## 7 THE ‘LEVELS’ DIMENSION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH

The University’s *Framework for Research* has three *levels of focus*:

- Level 1:* University
- Level 2:* Faculty
- Level 3:* Individual staff member

Each of the three levels has its own main foci, responsibilities, and tasks, which address the contents, management, operations, development of, and improvements to, the research work in the University.

Table 1 maps the three *areas of focus* in developing the research work of the University onto the three *levels of focus* here: (University, Faculty, Individual Staff Member).

**Table 1: Two dimensions of the structure for the Strategic Plan for Research**

Areas of content focus	University	Faculty	Individual Staff Member
Research environment, people, and culture			
Research outputs, contribution to knowledge and understanding			
Engagement in, and impact of, research			

The three levels are unpacked below.

### 7.1 THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

1. The University must have, and review, its policy and practices for ensuring the high quality of research and research-related activities and development in each Faculty.
2. The University must have a leadership and management structure and mechanism for ensuring that the quality of the research work in the University is active,

sufficient, and bringing benefit to its research work, its oversight, provision, quality, impact, significance, evaluation, and development.

3. The University must ensure that there is a strategic plan for the University's research work, together with a mechanism for developing, reviewing, and overseeing the realisation of that plan in practice.
4. The University must have, and operate, a University Research Committee and a University Research Ethics Committee, with their terms of reference, powers, and responsibilities set out, operational, and reviewed as appropriate.
5. The University must have a dedicated Research Development Office at the University level, that handles and meets the requirements of, and liaison with, with external and internal agencies and agents for the preparation, submission, operation, monitoring and follow-up on research bids and reporting submitted to funding agencies and agents.
6. The University must ensure that each Faculty has an active, productive, and impactful Research Coordinator.
7. The University must have a policy for research and research ethics, risk management, and a mechanism for ensuring compliance with these policies across the University.
8. The University must have an ongoing, secure repository of data on research activities and outcomes from each Faculty and individual staff member, together with reviewing the research performance of the University based on repository evidence.
9. The University must provide financial, managerial, administrative, material, and leadership support for the sustainable development and operations of research and research facilities across the University.
10. The University must set out its provision for the operations, development, maintenance, and continuous improvement of, and support for, its research culture and environment across the University.
11. The University must ensure that each Faculty has, and operates, its own quinquennial strategic plan and triennial action plan for research, together with its own mechanism for reviewing and developing its research environment and culture, staffing, work, outputs, and impact, and the indicators, criteria, and evidence of quality of these.
12. The University must ensure that each Faculty fulfils the requirements for promoting, assessing, evaluating, and reviewing, developing, and improving research projects, activities and their quality, outputs, uptake, and impact.
13. The University must ensure that each Faculty has appropriate academic staff who are 'research active', together with the criteria for being 'research active'.
14. The University must ensure that each Faculty has appropriate strategies and practices for training and developing researchers at staff and student levels.

## **7.2 THE FACULTY LEVEL**

Each Faculty must ensure that it has the following and that these are in operation and are yielding positive outcomes, uptake, and impact:

1. The Faculty must indicate how it addresses, in practice, and aligns with, the University's *Strategic Plan For Research*.

2. The Faculty must have leadership and management structure and mechanisms for ensuring that the quality of the research and research work in the Faculty are active, sufficient, and bringing benefit to its research work, its oversight, provision, quality, impact, significance, evaluation and development.
3. The Faculty must have its own Strategic Plan for activating, prioritising, operating, ensuring, reviewing, evaluating, developing, assuring, and improving the provision, contents, scope, activities, and quality of its research work, including, but not limited to, the areas of focus set out in Section 6 and the high quality coverage of, maintenance of, and ongoing improvements to:
  - i. research foci, contents, conduct, and outputs
  - ii. research quality, originality, rigour, and significance
  - iii. research environment and culture
  - iv. research provision, support, and facilities
  - v. needs in improving research
  - vi. research activities in the Faculty
  - vii. research development and training for, and activities of, staff and students
  - viii. research networking and collaboration with outside parties and stakeholders
  - ix. outcomes of research, and their uptake and impact
  - x. research monitoring and review
4. Each Faculty must decide and state how to operate the University's indicators, why, and what criteria it will use when working with the indicators (i.e. to identify high and low quality in each indicator), and, where necessary, the evidence that it will use in coming to a judgement of the quality of the research in addressing that indicator.
5. The Faculty must have, state, and use, its own procedures for reviewing and developing its Strategic Plan and all its operations and activities of research.
6. The Faculty must have, state, operate, act on the outcomes of, and engage in ongoing review of, its procedures, foci, and contents for judging the quality of its research provision, support and development, contents, foci, activities, projects, outputs and their uptake and impact.
7. The Faculty must indicate, annually, the action taken on the outcomes of its indicators and evidence of research activity, output, and outcomes, for each member of staff in the Faculty, to improve the quality of the research work in the Faculty.
8. The Faculty must have, operate, and ensure ongoing review of, a formal Faculty procedure for reviewing and approving research proposals and, where appropriate, research ethics, risk analysis and safeguarding, for both funded and unfunded research, by staff and students.
9. The Faculty must have an active, productive, and impactful Research Coordinator, together with a procedure for the review of the work and outcomes of the work of the Research Coordinator and its impact on improving the quality of the research work, research environment and culture, and researcher and research development in the Faculty, and uptake and impact of research outputs.
10. The Faculty must have, operate, and ensure ongoing review of research projects and activities of its staff and students.



11. The Faculty must indicate, operate, and review annually the provision for the development of staff and students as researchers, together with the uptake, impact and outcomes of such provision.
12. The Faculty must make recommendations to the University, on an annual basis, for the provision, development, and improvement of research in the Faculty.
13. The Faculty must fulfil the University's requirements for promoting, assessing, evaluating, and reviewing, developing, and improving research projects, activities and their quality, outputs, uptake, and impact.
14. The Faculty must ensure that it has appropriate academic staff who are 'research active', together with the criteria for being 'research active'.

### **7.3 THE INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBER LEVEL**

Each academic staff member in the University must ensure, on an ongoing and annual basis, that they have fulfilled the following:

1. Registering with ORCID
2. Updating their entries in the University repository each time they have a new, recognised output
3. Being 'research active' whilst taking account of contextual matters, e.g. age, experience, stage in their career, teaching, supervision, and administrative commitments
4. Providing evidence to inform the University's indicators and criteria of research activity and planning, with regard to research in the Faculty and their own performance
5. Ensuring that they have addressed key indicators of involvement in research production and research work
6. Agreeing with their Dean, their plans and proposals for research projects, activities, involvement, contents, and outcomes: their quality, rigour, originality, significance, uptake, and impact
7. Liaising with the Research Development Office with regard to funded research, as appropriate
8. Indicating the steps taken to improve the quality of their research and its outcomes, and their own research performance, skills, experiences, and competences
9. Being actively involved in the research activities and events of the Faculty, as appropriate, and contributing to the development of the research environment and output in their Faculty
10. Providing evidence of their contribution to the development of, and involvement in promoting the research environment, culture, and activities of their Faculty
11. Providing evidence of liaising closely with the Faculty's Research Coordinator in supporting, promoting, and developing the scope, activities, involvement in, and quality improvement in the research work, environment, culture and activities, in the Faculty
12. Taking and reporting steps taken to improve their status in being 'research active'
13. Taking and reporting their research networking and collaboration with outside parties and stakeholders

14. Making recommendations to the Faculty for the development of research in the Faculty

## 8 THE 'TIME' DIMENSION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH

The three *areas of focus* and *levels of focus* of the implementation of the *Strategic Plan for Research* are staged in the three phases of development and implementation set out below, as the University recognises and respects the need for time for development and implementation of the many areas of focus of the research work to take place. Hence, the time dimension is added to the elements of the *Strategic Plan for Research* for the development of research in the University. The *Strategic Plan for Research* has a five-year lifespan.

The timescales set out here are designed to address several features:

1. to enable there to be flexibility in addressing the implementation of the *Strategic Plan for Research*, recognising that some parts take longer to implement than others.
2. to recognise that evaluation and refocusing are not confined to years 5 onwards, but are continuous, as matters and issues emerge over time continuously, i.e. several parts of each of the three phases are likely to overlap.
3. to ensure that the three areas of focus of the research in the *contents dimension* are addressed from the initial phase onwards.
4. To align the development and implementation of research with its plans for research development.

It is unrealistic to expect a short-term implementation and achievement of all the dimensions of research development and performance set out in the contents and levels of the *Strategic Plan for Research*. Rather, the *Strategic Plan for Research* is built on the acceptance of the developmental nature of assuring, enhancing, and developing high quality research and research work, with the development of research adopting a ground-up process. Hence, the *Strategic Plan for Research*, in setting out its vision, mission, aims and framework for the development and impact of research, it stages the handling of this into three phases in accomplishing the research development in the University, addressing realism into the forward planning. The three phases are:

### 8.1 PHASE 1: YEAR ONE

This accomplishes the devising and sharing of the University's *Strategic Plan for Research* and for each Faculty to have its own, aligned, quinquennial *Faculty Strategic Plan for Research* and triennial *Action Plan for Research*, for developing, maintaining and operating research and research work in the Faculty. In Phase 1 (one year), each Faculty draws up its quinquennial Strategic Plan and initial triennial Action Plan for developing its research work over the subsequent four years, that is aligned to the University's *Strategic Plan for Research*. This recognises and respects the specific nature and features of each Faculty with

regard to research, whilst developing all the Faculties, and based on the University's *Policy for Research, Framework for Research, Quality Assurance for Research, and Strategic Plan for Research*.

### **Targets for Phase One**

Phase one is a preparatory year, setting targets for completion by the end of Phase One which will feed directly into the work of subsequent phases 2 and 3, so that the decisions taken, the activities proposed, the mechanisms and procedures indicated below, can become operative from years two and thereafter.

#### **University level**

1. The University to install and commence operation of its Research Committee
2. The University to install and operate its *Quality Assurance of Research*
3. The University to install its mechanism for ensuring compliance with the research and research ethics policies across the University
4. The University to decide on whether and how to operate its internal research funding arrangements
5. The University to decide on how to operate staff research leave
6. The University to set out and submit to the Executive Council and Senate its proposals for what it will be doing in Phase two to meet the requirements set down by the University and Faculties with regard to research work.

#### **Faculty level**

7. Each Faculty to have its leadership and management structure for ensuring that the quality of the research and the research work and activities in the Faculty are active, sufficient, and that these are bringing benefit to its research work
8. Each Faculty to complete its metrics and intangible indicators for reporting and deciding its research output
9. Each Faculty to complete writing its quinquennial *Faculty Strategic Plan for Research*
10. Each Faculty to complete writing its first triennial *Action Plan for Research*
11. Each Faculty to complete its situational analysis of its current state of research
12. Each Faculty to have a full, concrete time-scheduled plan for research activities and the promotion of a research culture and environment at Faculty level for Phase 2 onwards
13. Each Faculty to have in place and operate its mechanism for reviewing and planning the development of research for each Individual Staff Member
14. Each Faculty having in place its plans for ensuring that its academic staff are 'research active'
15. Each Faculty to have written and to have in place and operating its procedures for considering and deciding on research proposal, research reports, and research ethics
16. Each Faculty to have identified its provision of staff and student training in research
17. Each Faculty to have devised, and made ready to implement, a Faculty reporting pro-forma for each Individual Staff Member to report their research activities, involvement, outputs, research work, etc.

18. Each Faculty to set out and submit to the University its concrete proposals for what they will be doing in Phase Two to meet the requirements set out by the University and the Faculty with regard to research work.

#### **Individual Staff Member level**

19. Each Individual Staff Member to have registered with ORCID
20. Each Individual Staff Member to have updated the University's repository of research
21. Each Individual Staff Member to have written their plan for the next academic year, to address their own research, research development and training, research involvement at the Faculty level, research content and plans, annual appraisal of research work and output. These are to address their concrete plans and activities to improve the quality of their research and its outcomes, and their own research performance, skills, experiences, and competences
22. Each Individual Staff Member to have reported their involvement in Faculty research-related activities and events, and their action taken to extend, expand, improve, develop and create new areas in the Faculty's development of a research culture and environment
23. Each Individual Staff Member to identify what it has done to become and to sustain being 'research active' in the Faculty
24. Each Individual Staff Member to indicate what it has and what it has done to increase its networking and collaboration with outside parties and stakeholders in research
25. Each Individual Staff Member to report what it has contributed to advancing the academic work, culture, and environment in their faculty in that year
26. Each individual member to set out and submit to the Dean and research Coordinator their proposals for what they will be doing in Phase Two to meet the requirements set down by the University, the Faculty, and themselves with regard to research work.

## **8.2 PHASE 2: YEARS TWO TO FOUR**

This phase puts into practice the actions that the University, the Faculties, and Individual Staff Members set up in Phase 1, together with monitoring and reviewing them, and ensuring that requirements are being observed and operational, and to plan and implement: (a) continuous development and improvements; (b) action planning and implementation; (c) amendments and extensions arising from the research work and activities in the University. The University will continue its oversight and where appropriate its guidance and management of the research work of the University; each Faculty will commence the implementation of the *Faculty Strategic Plan* and the triennial *Action Plans* that it has drawn up for developing and improving research; each Individual Staff Member will implement, monitor, and review their stated plans for their own research work, involvement, projects, output etc.

Phase two enacts the first three-year Action Plan of each Faculty, i.e. years two, three and four of the five-year plan. By the end of year four, each Faculty will have reviewed its Action Plan and this will feed into the development of its revised Strategic Plan to be written in year 5 (phase three). Similarly, in year four the University will conduct its review of the research work of the University, with a view to revising its own Strategic Plan in year five.

### 8.3 PHASE 3: YEAR 5

This is the phase of maturity, and, as it includes the time of the quinquennial review and devising a new Strategic Plan for Research at University, Faculty, and Individual Staff Member levels. This Phase both looks back over the preceding years and looks forward to the future developments and actions concerning the research work at the University.

Maturity, here, embraces further strategic planning, modification, and refocusing of the areas of content and levels of implementation in the original *Strategic Plan for Research* of the University and each Faculty's addressing of this.

## 9 ACTION PLANNING FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH

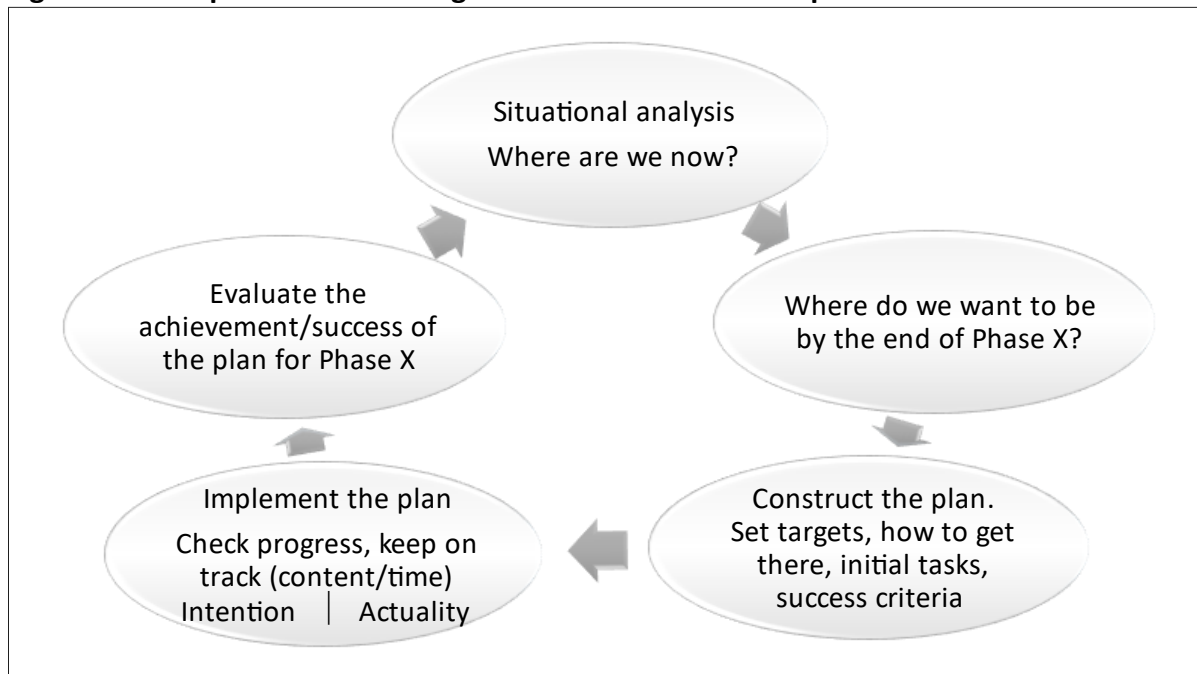
Given that the time span is long, there is a risk of the planned developments going 'off track', e.g. in terms of timing, content, foci etc., it is important to have a workable mechanism for ensuring that there is no slippage here. This is addressed by ongoing monitoring and triennial Action Plans and continuous checking how well they are 'working'.

In developing and implementing action planning in each Faculty, and with regard to the Strategic Objectives set out in this *Strategic Plan for Research*, it is important to address the following points. For each and every *Strategic Objective*, it is useful and important to identify and state:

1. The *Actionable Measure/Step* that is being addressed.
2. The *main area of focus* to achieve/address the Actionable Measure/Step (e.g. policy, research projects, research activities, procedures, staff development, areas of operation, monitoring and review). Make the *main area of focus* a sub-title of that part of the Action Plan.
3. The *main target(s)/objective(s)* for that main area of focus.
4. The *main action(s) and tasks* to be taken to achieve/address the main targets/objectives.
5. Person(s) with *overall responsibility* for that task/action.
6. *Other person(s)* responsible for working on that task/action.
7. *Resources* required (e.g. people, time, administration, finance, expertise, materials, equipment).
8. *Time frame* for each task/action.
9. The *monitoring/review/evaluation/milestones* for each task/action.
10. The *key performance indicators and success criteria* (how you know if we have achieved the targets/objectives).

The process of action planning, implementation and reviewing here are set out in straightforward terms in Figure 1. These follow the pattern of action research.

**Figure 1. Conceptual model of stages to address in an action plan**



Turning these areas into an action plan for the development and implementation of research, Table 2 suggests that Faculties start by identifying targets and success criteria. *Then* they plan their routes and tasks to achieving those targets, with stated criteria for judging that they are ‘on track’. *Then* they plan the initial tasks to be undertaken in setting out on this path to achievement of high quality in quality assurance of research. Each stage here requires its own success criteria for checking achievement of the intention and evaluating the level of congruence between intention and actuality.

In making the action plan ‘work’ successfully, it is useful to address the following questions:

- Where are we now?
- What is the staff capability/capacity to move ahead and what capability/capacity building is needed?
- What are the specific goals and targets?
- What is to be done (clear, specific, concrete actions/activities/tasks)?
- Who is to do which parts of it (responsibilities)?
- When it is to be done by (end point timing)?
- How will progress be monitored (by whom, when, how)?
- How will progress be evaluated (by whom, when, how)?
- How will the action plan know if it is on track?
- How will the Faculty know if it has achieved the targets?
- What are the success criteria (maybe with quantitative and qualitative targets against which to judge progress)?

- What timescales are there for different stages of implementation?
- What resources are required for this action plan to ‘work’ effectively and to be successful?

**Table 2. Action planning for research and its quality assurance**

<b>ACTION PLANS</b>		
<b>Targets, tasks, success criteria</b>		
	<b>IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>EVALUATION ACTIVITIES</b>
<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>PREPARATIONS (Initial tasks)</b>	<b>CHECK FOR READINESS</b>
<b>STAGE 2</b>	<b>ROUTES (Tasks)</b>	<b>CHECK PROGRESS</b>
<b>STAGE 3</b>	<b>DESTINATIONS (Targets)</b>	<b>CHECK SUCCESS</b>

**Advice: When planning, start from the end of (Stage 3) and work backwards**

In developing and implementing action planning for developing research, this includes, *inter alia*, planning, implementing, monitoring, reviewing, evaluating, and continuously improving the contents and quality of its research, its projects contents, activities, outputs, outcomes, impact and consequences. These all need to be documented and reported. Here action planning in the University, each Faculty, and each Individual Staff Member operates in a helical model akin to action research where plans for have cycles of sequences, with each cycle addressing a possible sequence set out here:

1. Identify problem/issue to be addressed in improving the research work →
2. Prepare preliminary intervention planning for addressing the issue (improving the quality of the research worl →
3. Decide on the intervention to be conducted →
4. Detail plan for the intervention, including success criteria →
5. Implement the intervention →
6. Monitor and record the implementation and its effects →
7. Review and evaluation the outcomes of the intervention →
8. Judge how effectively the intervention has addressed/solved the problem/issue in improving the quality of the research work →
9. Move to the next cycle of improving the quality of the research work, informed by the outcomes of the previous cycle.

Here, each stage involves evaluation, reflection, and reflexivity. It is a process of continuous improvement.

Table 3 takes the three main foci set out in Section 6: (i) *Research environment, people, and culture*; (ii) *Research outputs, contribution to knowledge*; and (iii) *Engagement in, and impact of, research*, and indicates a consistent set of considerations in planning implementing, monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating the action plans and its effects.

**Table 3. Content components of the framework for the *Strategic Plan for Research***

<b>FOCUS 1: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE, AND CULTURE</b>
Responsibilities, tasks, and procedures
Indicators of quality
Criteria for making judgements of quality
Evidence required
Procedures for monitoring/review
Judgement of quality
Action for improvement
<b>FOCUS 2: RESEARCH OUTPUTS, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING</b>
Responsibilities, tasks, and procedures
Indicators of quality
Criteria for making judgements of quality
Evidence required
Procedures for monitoring/review
Judgement of quality
Action for improvement
<b>FOCUS 3: ENGAGEMENT IN, AND IMPACT OF, RESEARCH</b>
Responsibilities, tasks, and procedures
Indicators of quality
Criteria for making judgements of quality
Evidence required
Procedures for monitoring/review
Judgement of quality
Action for improvement

Whilst Phase One can be more prescriptive, as it is setting up some basic research work issues for development, Phase Two implements these, whilst Phase three is deliberately less prescriptive, as the document recognizes the dynamic, emergent nature of research work and its development in the University, such that, at present, it is imprudent to be over-prescriptive at this stage. The document argues that a key part of turning this *Strategic Plan for Research* into practical, tactical levels requires the development of *Faculty Strategic Plans for Research* and *Faculty Action Plans*, and these are for each Faculty to develop and implement, as there is no ‘one size-fits-all’ here.



## 10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This document operates at the *strategic* level. It has set out key dimensions and key considerations, foci, and issues for each of these. Given the diversity and complexity of research work and the term ‘research’, a major challenge is to gain some purchase on these. The present document has rationalised its *Strategic Plan for Research* into three key *dimensions*:

- Three content areas:
  - i. *Research environment, people, and culture*
  - ii. *Research outputs, contribution to knowledge*
  - iii. *Engagement in, and impact of, research*
- Three *levels*:
  - i. University
  - ii. Faculty
  - iii. Individual Academic Staff Member
- Three *phases*:
  - i. Phase 1: year 1
  - ii. Phase 2: years 2-4
  - iii. Phase 3: year 5

Operationalising and implementing these is the task of *tactical* planning and implementation, and the document has suggested the value of action planning here, and it has provided some questions that can be addressed in drawing up action plans, together with some considerations in organising and implementing action plans, a key element of which is the need to ongoing monitoring, review, evaluation, and reflection.