

Research Strategy 2006 – 2010

Preface

The University's Strategic Plan 2006-2010, "Building on Excellence" (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/buildingonexcellence/>) was published in Spring 2006. This sets out our ambition to be one of the best universities in the world, by being an outstanding place for research, teaching and learning. We aim to be recognised as one of the UK's top 10 universities, and as one of the world's top 50 research-intensive universities.

This Research Strategy, developed alongside "Building on Excellence", expands on the vision and objectives for research set out in that document. It was developed under the leadership of Professor Steve Beaumont, Vice Principal (Research and Enterprise), through a process that included extensive consultation with staff including a web-based consultation accessible to all staff.

Responsibility for the implementation of this strategy rests with the Vice Principal (Research and Enterprise) and the Research Planning and Strategy Committee (RPSC), chaired by the VP (R&E). Led by RPSC, this document acts as a framework for the development of institutional, faculty and department priorities and actions on a rolling basis, consistent with the University's overall planning processes.

Performance is monitored through a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), established in early 2007.

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Director, Research Strategy

1. Introduction

The University of Glasgow has a long-established reputation as a research-led university as demonstrated by:

- **Research Quality:** The 2001 Research Assessment Exercise rated 67% of our submitted staff in 5 or 5* units
- **Research Volume:** For 2004/05, research awards exceeded £100million

Research excellence was clearly articulated in the University's Strategic Plan 2003-2006 through one of the institution's four high level objectives, namely "*To achieve international distinction in research*", which in turn was supported through a range of more detailed individual objectives and specific actions.

This Research Strategy has been developed during a period of change and development in the University's activities, in their broadest sense, during which a detailed and critical examination of the University's operations, its markets, and its role in the local and wider environments, has been undertaken. One output from that is the institutional Strategic Plan for the period 2006-2010 which sets out the University's ambitions for the period, together with the strategic priorities and actions for achieving those ambitions. Overall our aim is to reinforce vigorously the University's status as a major international university that sustains and adds value to Scottish culture, to the natural environment, and to the economy and society of Glasgow, Scotland and the wider world.

This Research Strategy supports the overall ambitions of the institutional strategy, providing both breadth and depth to the articulation of our ambitions as a research-driven university, and setting out the key strategic approaches which we will take to enable the achievement of our ambitions and goals.

Effective strategies are multi-functional. A key function of this strategy is its role in supporting a planned approach to investing in excellence, thus enabling effective use of limited resources for maximum benefit, including, where appropriate, supporting decisions about increasing research focus. Associated with this, the strategy will support a well-informed approach to risk-taking in the on-going development of our research portfolio. Other functions include a role as a powerful mechanism for communicating the University's vision to research collaborators and research funders, and as a magnet for the attraction of researchers and research students.

Mindful that strategy is ineffective without a clear view of how it will be implemented, this document is designed to serve as a template for the development of action plans at all levels in the institution. Action at an institutional level is one aspect of delivery of the strategy; we hope that the vision and priorities identified will engage faculties, department and individual academic staff to contribute to the delivery of the institutional strategy through their local plans and initiatives.

A Research Strategy cannot sit in isolation; areas of interaction with other aspects of the institutional strategy, for example the Strategy for Teaching and Learning and plans for Central Services will be apparent. It is important that such interactions are fully explored and approaches agreed to enable the successful implementation of this, and other components, of the institutional strategy.

2. Vision

Effective strategy is important for the definition and sharing – both internally and externally – of a powerful and achievable vision for the future of research within the University. As higher education becomes an increasingly international community and market place, we have chosen to set our ambitions in terms, firstly, of the University's position as a research-driven institution on the world stage. Our vision for research is:

“By developing and supporting a confident and successful academic research community, to be one of the world's top 50 research-intensive universities, recognised for its position at the forefront of setting and delivering the research agenda, nationally and internationally, across the range of disciplines in which we are active.”

As a result of the implementation of this strategy, we expect our research portfolio to develop in a way that the University of Glasgow is seen to be:

- A **leading** research institution, in the sense of setting and leading research agenda, both politically and from a discipline perspective
- A **confident** research institution, as characterised by its ability to recruit and nurture high quality academics and excellent research students, whether from the UK or internationally
- A **successful** research institution, across a range of measures including quality of research outputs, research income, international recognition and collaborations and performance relative to peer institutions both nationally (eg Russell Group) and internationally (eg Times Higher international league table)

We define Top 50 worldwide by our position in research-specific international league tables. Such league tables, designed using measures of success, including peer review and international staffing and students, which can be reasonably compared across countries with differing economies, have developed over the past few years and have already become highly influential. The leading examples are the Times Higher International league table and the league table compiled by Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The University of Glasgow is rated 101 in the Times Higher table (published 27 October 2005), up from 112 in 2004, and in the 100-150 bracket of Shanghai Jiao Tong table (August 2005). We believe that aiming for the Top 50 is a stretching but achievable ambition of the period 2006 –2010.

This international ambition translates, in a national context, as a position in the top 10 of UK universities. Within the UK, as a member of the Russell Group of 19 research-led universities, we aim to be amongst the top third of that group, across the range of research performance indicators regularly monitored (eg RAE performance, publications quality and research income).

We will use a range of metrics to track our progress and indeed to set ourselves targets. Our key indicator of success is research excellence, measured primarily by quality of research outputs, through assessments such as the Research Assessment Exercise (to be undertaken next in 2007). A range of other metrics will be used, as discussed in Section 6, including, for example, research income, publications in high impact journals, participation rates in funded research activities and research student numbers, including proportion of international students.

3. Strategic Themes and Objectives

We have identified four strategic themes, and specific objectives relating to each of them:

A. Research Environment

The academic community lies at the heart of the University's capacity to achieve its ambitions in research. Central to this strategy is enabling the academic community to deliver the highest quality research in pursuit of our overall vision. Hence this strategic theme is an over-arching theme, essential to the other three themes.

We will provide an operational environment that recognises and supports the central importance of excellence in research to the University. This includes, for example, issues relating to physical infrastructure, management processes, and the balance of teaching, research and administrative responsibilities

Objectives:

- A1.** To create a supportive environment for ambitious early career researchers and high-achieving academics
- A2.** To serve the academic community with an excellent, responsive and fully integrated research administration
- A3.** To nurture a high quality graduate research (PGR) environment
- A4.** To manage financial resources to support research capacity and infrastructure consistent with world-class research-led university

B. International Excellence

In a higher education sector which is increasingly international, we will identify and support at an institutional level, a range of priorities that will enhance the international excellence of our research portfolio. These include institutional strategic alliances, international business opportunities and the philanthropic role of the university in terms of international alliances in developing countries.

Objectives:

- B1.** To take a proactive lead in setting the research agenda
- B2.** To set standards of research excellence for the institution that permeate staff recruitment, management and support
- B3.** To increase international research student numbers and quality
- B4.** To improve our visibility as a leading international research-led university, including promoting our research portfolio and outputs internationally
- B5.** To increase international research earnings

C. Inter-disciplinary Research

Across broad spectra of the University's research portfolio, from Arts and Humanities to Science and Engineering, new and dynamic research is increasingly taking place at the interfaces between traditional academic disciplines. Recognising and responding to these opportunities requires a proactive approach which is flexible and responsive to dynamic nature of inter-disciplinary research, and supports the long-term sustainability of such activities.

Objectives:

- C1.** To capitalise on the breadth of the university's research base to develop and sustain a strong portfolio of inter-disciplinary research
- C2.** To improve the opportunities for, and effectiveness of, the initiation of new inter-disciplinary research collaborations
- C3.** To provide effective management and support structures for inter-disciplinary projects and initiatives throughout their life cycle

D. Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge transfer (KT), in its broadest sense, is a key output of academic research, whether it is effected through the training of postgraduate research students who subsequently apply that knowledge in the public or private sector, through contract research, or the exploitation of intellectual property in established or start-up companies. Our strategy recognises knowledge transfer as a key function of the university and supports the breadth of knowledge transfer opportunities associated with research.

Objectives:

- D1.** To be recognised as the most innovative university in the UK for KT development.
- D2.** To capitalise on the breadth of our research portfolio and innovation of our research community to maximise KT outputs
- D3.** To maximise funding in support of new KT initiatives
- D4.** To increase international KT activity

4. Implementation and Performance Indicators

By identifying strategic themes and objectives, this strategy is designed to provide an enabling framework which will inform and guide detailed action planning at all levels in the University. Successful implementation will require the engagement of colleagues throughout the University. Overall, the framework is open and inclusive, enabling individual Faculties, Departments and research groupings to develop discipline-specific strategies and plans that both benefit from the institutional approach, and complement and extend its scope and success.

While we have set our vision as attaining a position in the top 50 world-leading university, our actions towards that goal will be determined by pursuing our identified strategic priorities, informed by the league table criteria, rather than driven by them.

It is important for the delivery of this strategy that we establish and monitor a range of performance indicators, in order to track progress. As previously stated, our key indicator of success is research excellence, measured primarily by quality of research outputs. While the Research Assessment Exercise may be seen as a leading indicator of independent assessment of research quality, it provides only a snap-shot of performance at relatively infrequent intervals, with the next exercise due to be undertaken in 2008. Therefore, while RAE performance is important, a range of other indicators has been developed, which can provide year-on-year indication of progress.

Position in international league tables and position in the Russell Group, across a range of parameters, are useful also comparators.