

School of Education & Social Work

Strategic Framework for Research with Impact: 2019-25

Context:

We operate in an uncertain environment that includes numerous psychosocial, health and economic impacts from sequelae of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and wider precarities (e.g., post-Brexit, austerity and climate-related), all of which have implications for HE recruitment/retention and for research capacity and funding. In a dynamic research landscape, new opportunities and requirements are also emerging: from targeted investments in research funding by UKRI and other funders, to changing expectations for open research and enhanced emphasis on research integrity. We are well placed to respond to these developments, with particular strengths in interdisciplinary research and research with impact. Our strategy is designed to preserve and enrich a successful research culture – one that enables individuals and their creativity to flourish and thrive and facilitates agility in relation to changing external opportunities. It is this vibrant and energized research culture that will lead to a strong REF 2029 outcome, rather than letting REF requirements and processes drive our approach. Essential to this vision is research with integrity, delivered by a secure and well managed staff group whose development is nurtured at every career stage.

This strategic framework sets out our intent to sustain a distinctive research culture, enhancing our reputation for interdisciplinary excellence and challenging conventional thinking.

Our strategy commits us to a **vision** of research that:

- makes a positive difference to policy, practice and lived experience;
- is informed by a rigorous, critical and ethical perspective on knowledge production;
- actively engages with those who have a stake in our work;
- builds research-capacity, including via co-production;
- Infuses our own teaching, learning and professional development
- sees research as a public service and a public good.

Objectives are mapped to the pillars of the updated *Sussex 2025 Strategy*:

- **Capacity and profile:** Through visible leadership, to drive sector-wide improvements in research, policy and practice, strengthening partnerships with our stakeholders and shaping agendas through leadership and collaboration, locally, nationally and internationally.
- **Culture:** To further evolve our environment, with enhanced attention to integrity, equalities and diversity, inclusion of ESW's PGR community, research staff support, technological sophistication and climate change resilience.
- **Challenges:** To attract, nurture, and sustain research talent, strengthening our capacity for investigator-driven and policy/practice-driven and tendered research, through close alignment of research, teaching and staffing priorities in appointments and succession planning in research leadership.
- **Excellence:** To enable high quality research trajectories, underpinned by excellent research mentoring, internal peer review and transparent and equity focussed research management.
- **Diversification:** To further diversify our scholarship and funding portfolio and align with funder priorities, valuing a mix of national and international research councils, government, third and private sector funders, and nurturing strategic relationships with non-HEI research collaborators.

Mechanisms: our approach to promoting these objectives and monitoring progress will take account of emerging faculty developments, and include a range of forms, including as an element of:

- individual research planning (IRPs) and research information systems;
- annual reporting formats for Research Centres;
- criteria evaluating applications for study leave and internal research funding;
- rigorous and constructive internal review processes for research bids;
- priorities for staff development and mentoring, supported by the formal ADR process;
- regular research away days, training support and capacity building opportunities tailored to colleagues at different career stages and differing needs and objectives;
- regular and inclusive opportunities for building collective research culture with high levels of participation from all involved in research
- focused and time limited projects, established by and reporting to ESW Research Committee.

Indicators: our objectives will translate into hard outcomes as evaluated through the University KPIs for research in areas of research income, research contribution, volumes of research applications, ratio of application to success, and international authorship. We also intend that there will be softer outcomes visible at School level including evidence of:

- visible leadership within our fields (academic, professional and public);
- knowledge exchange that engages both scholarship and research;
- a privileging of quality over quantity in research outputs;
- a balanced portfolio of funded research in terms of funders, scale and type of project
- satisfaction among staff that they are able to undertake rewarding research and to progress in their research development over time;
- a shared commitment by all colleagues with research in their contracts to bidding, collaborating (across School, Faculty, University, and externally as appropriate), producing research outputs and engaging in dissemination, knowledge-exchange and impact activities, commensurate with workload allocations;
- a shared understanding among Faculty of the collective research agenda and the need to balance the costs and rewards associated with research activity;
- appointments that contribute to synergies between research and teaching;
- a commitment to the centrality and importance of research centres in supporting individual and collective mentoring and research capacity development and collaboration between research centres.

Last updated February 2024

Approved at ESW SRC 44: Feb 2024