

Law School research strategy 2023

Section 1: The Law School research vision and themes

1. The vision is to provide a supportive, inclusive and stimulating environment and culture to enable all colleagues to fulfil their potential, intellectual curiosity and research ambitions, in preparing high quality written outputs; seeking and obtaining grant income which is most suited to colleagues' research (from international networks to an individual fellowship); delivering research-led teaching and an effective and supportive environment for Postgraduate researchers (PGRs); embedding in research the delivery of impact, knowledge transfer and commercialisation and pipelines towards them; engaging with the legal profession, the academy, industry, civil society, law reform processes and other publics; and contributing to the delivery of the University's Aberdeen 2040 pillars (interdisciplinarity, sustainability, inclusive and international), and the 2040 challenges.
2. The School will embrace the themes of collaboration, research excellence, delivering real world change and supported career development.

Section 2: To bring about this vision and to embrace the themes, the School needs:

1. to provide colleagues with as much as time as possible to engage in all aspects of research, (noting that the REF is of core importance) and to develop their own paths;
2. to provide colleagues with relevant, supportive and stimulating research home(s) within a wider research community;
3. to provide colleagues with constructive feedback on evolving research;
4. to further mainstream the seeking of research funding;
5. to provide training and capacity building to assist in research;
6. to provide further training in identifying and developing impact opportunities, further support in delivery of impact and to further mainstream impact into research planning and activity;
7. to maintain and develop a vibrant PGR student and post-doctoral researcher community and enhance their experience for their own benefit, and that of future students, the School and the discipline of Law at large;
8. to develop further the contributions the School can make to Aberdeen 2040 and the 2040 challenges; and

9. to raise the profile of the School and its members within the University, nationally and internationally.

Section 3: To address these needs, the School will:

Make Time Available

1. continue to reflect on approaches by the School to the overall allocation to colleagues of tasks and opportunities for career development (including those which are not related to research), having regard to colleagues' contracts, potential and level of experience, to ensure that (i) there is fair (though not necessarily identical), holistic and transparent allocation of tasks and opportunities (ii) account can be taken of the time required to prepare research grants, deliver funded research projects, deliver impact case studies which the School has chosen as priorities, and fulfil significant leadership roles and (iii) regard is had to equality, diversity and inclusion issues of all kinds;
2. continue with its recent updated research leave policy and undertake a light touch review of it in 2023, including regarding the offering of mentoring to colleagues while they are on leave and ensuring that decisions regarding grant of leave engage fully with the School's needs regarding delivery of education and PGR supervision;
3. continue to seek to enhance its staff-student ratio, including through staff recruitment, as much as possible so that colleagues have time to engage in research in a sustainable manner during teaching periods and when colleagues are not on research leave;
4. continue to consider recruitment of staff who demonstrate significant research potential and excellence, at all levels, taking into account their potential contribution to the research priorities of the School, including regarding PGR supervision;
5. provide colleagues with guidance on effective paths to choose their own priorities and align all their activities as efficiently as possible, recognising that colleagues cannot engage fully in all aspects of the research vision at the same time and that colleagues will have strengths in different areas;
6. seek to embed the provision of protected time for research, ensuring, e.g., that colleagues who have been allocated a comparatively heavy workload over the summer months obtain protected research time elsewhere;
7. to ensure that the School in all its practices operates in as efficient as manner as possible in an attempt to maximise the time available to research;

Planning and structures

8. continue to develop opportunities for colleagues to have feedback on evolving work (in written and oral form, e.g., through a research seminar) through the School, School Research Centres and other collaborative clusters;
9. continue with the revived practice of the Director of Research meeting with colleagues annually for a supportive reflection on their research and their short, medium and longer term plans;
10. put in place new interventions, including working with University Research and Innovation, to raise awareness of potentially suitable grant opportunities and provide support how on best to build a research project, funding application and team;
11. put in place new interventions, including working with University Research and Innovation, to enhance guidance on impact paths which may arise from colleagues proposed research, and training and support on how best to develop an impact pipeline and, when appropriate, impact case studies;
12. provide colleagues with guidance on how most effectively to connect and collaborate with partners and research users, including across the University, across the School, nationally and internationally (including through seminar series, UK and international visiting scholars opportunities, consolidating and creating international partnerships, building networks, exploring opportunities for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research approaches and holding conferences);
13. continue to ensure that colleagues are aware of the evolving REF requirements, of accompanying practices (such as in relation to PURE, open access and responsible metrics), and of indications from data about possibly effective strategic approaches to content and method;
14. work closely with University research leaders in relation to open research and integrity, notably the Library in relation to open access and monographs, to ensure that colleagues are aware of the evolving landscape and to ensure that School leaders make decisions on how the School can best support colleagues in relation to open access;
15. enhance training and collaboration opportunities in relation to research methods and Aberdeen 2040 and encourage colleagues to consider having inclusion, sustainability and international approaches in their research and engaging in interdisciplinary research;
16. have a research leadership structure which is aligned with University structures and which includes leads in impact, environment and culture, ethics, outputs and grants, Research Centre leads, Library, PGR Lead, early career and PGR representatives and School Aberdeen 2040 and Innovation leads;

17. building on its established School Research Centres, to enhance opportunities for inter-centre collaboration and for colleagues to explore new collaborations, with the objective of having clear research pillars for the School, contributing to the Aberdeen 2040 challenges and also encouraging organic collaboration on specific issues and clusters, including in relation to pedagogy;
18. continue to ensure that School led research events are organised in a timely manner and in a hybrid format to enable as many colleagues as possible to participate;
19. enhance internal and external communications and dissemination of research achievements and outcomes, including where appropriate when situations have not proceeded as hoped and this can be a learning opportunity (e.g., unsuccessful funding applications);
20. continue to ensure that early career scholars and PGRs are a full part of the School's research community and its leadership, and are supported in their development;

Support

21. continue to provide financial support to enable colleagues and PGR students to engage in all aspects of research activity, to enhance the budget for this as much as possible and for this financial support to be available to cover equality, diversity and inclusion related issues;
22. enhance the provision of administrative support for research; and
23. provide research training to meet needs, e.g., in relation to empirical research methods.

Section 4: Administration and review

1. The School will develop a detailed implementation plan for delivery of this strategy with milestones for its delivery of this Strategy.
2. Each year the School will evaluate progress towards delivery, and any new approaches which should be considered
3. This Strategy will be reviewed annually as part of the School's planning and strategy process and details will be shared with the School. A full review of this Strategy will be carried out every 3 years.

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