



Research Strategy 2017-2022

Principles of Research at Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

As a small specialist HEI of theatre and performance the College's research culture reflects its identity: vocational, diverse, collaborative and inclusive with an international, intercultural and interdisciplinary perspective. Practice research and scholarly activity resulting in a variety of outcomes is complemented by research that informs or is the consequence of pedagogy, or interfaces reciprocally with the theatre and live performance industries. The research agenda is linked also to MPhil/PhD, MA/MFA and PGCHE programmes, and the partnership with the University of East London and its MPhil/PhD provision.

Research at RBC from RAE2008 to REF2014

The imperative has been to build on the experience of RAE2008, thereby establishing a practice-led and sustainable research culture where its opportunities and outcomes are visible to all personnel in the College, and a variety of 'publics' beyond. The College's achievement in REF2014 was a considerable advance on the previous assessment exercise regarding both the overall quality profile: 49% graded at 4* and 3*, indicating an increase in average star rankings of 69.6%; and the institution's position in the UOA's final rankings, 29th out of 42 institutions. World-leading and internationally excellent research was achieved in several outputs exploring contemporary British playwrights, theatre lighting, sound, and performance history, graded at 53.6% of the submission; the institutional Impact statement and Case Studies on the Stanislavski Centre and Theatre for Young Audiences were graded at 100% across the 3* and 2* bandings; and the Environment narrative which contextualises all research activity in the College was placed in 3*, 2* and 1* bandings. The institution was unable to return in its submission Research Degree student numbers or details of grants secured from research funding bodies, although monies were forthcoming from a variety of other sources including earned income. The UOA 35 Sub-panel report is attached as Appendix 4.

The Research Strategy addresses both the achievements with regard to consolidation and sustainability and the shortcomings pertaining to capacity building and research power, deeper collaborations across the sector, and the securing of external research income.

Structure & Systems (as of 2017)

Research is located, advanced and promoted through five centres which have embraced and developed the themes and clusters identified in RAE2008: The Stanislavski Centre; Rose Bruford Centre for Voice and Speech; Clive Barker Centre for Theatrical Innovation including Hubs in New Writing and Technologies in Performance; Centre for Learning and Teaching in the Performing Arts; and Theatre for Young Audiences Centre (TYA). The Centres provide an overarching framework for research and other related activities, and their internal organisation enables both the development of research within a supportive structure, and the mechanism for collaboration across the institution and with external partners. Each Centre is linked to archives and collections owned by the College; has a Head of Centre and Advisory Board that develops research within specific disciplines; enables interdisciplinary projects in the College and collaboration with outside organisations; and schedules lectures, workshops and masterclasses, study days and conferences.

The College possesses dedicated buildings and facilities that provide a customised laboratory for practice research. The Research Office, including an integral study area, has an open-door policy; and its siting adjacent to the Clive Barker Library in the LRC and the Special Collections Room, and its visual presentation, makes it a welcoming and stimulating environment within which to meet and work.

The institution's annual week-long Symposium is a platform for the initiation, development and dissemination of research. It is linked with specific college-wide research projects, as well as affording space and time for individual students and staff to share their research engaged work. Moreover, it offers an important opportunity outside the constraints of the curriculum for the College community to interface with the profession, industry and academe in a spirit of enquiry and practice investigation.

Theatre Futures is the institution's research website, hosting pages for each Centre; information on current and past projects; details of the archives and collections; sections for different kinds of digital publications; symposia programmes and photographs; staff research profiles and personal pages; information on visiting professors, fellows, research associates and companies; and hyperlinks to relevant websites. The website is both a platform for publishing and disseminating research, and a research resource for internal and external use. www.theatrefutures.org.uk

Developing the strategy

Consultation within the institution has taken place during 2015 and 2016 involving the Vice Principal, the Associate Director of Research, the Director of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Development, the Heads of School, the Research Committee, a College Governor, Visiting Professors, Professors Emerita, members of Academic Board, Module Year Co-ordinators, and academic staff; thus taking account of the College's current academic profile, structure and systems, its relationship with other academic institutions at all levels of education, and relevant elements of the profession and creative industries. The Strategy notes also the

references to research and scholarly activity in the QAA Higher Education Review report, 2014, and the TDAP Scrutiny Team Draft Report, 2016; is advised by the Stern Review and the outcomes of further deliberations in the sector including GuildHE; observes the College's institutional submission to the TEF and its result; monitors the future of HEFCE and dispersal of QR funding by UKRI; and follows REF2021 consultation, documentation and briefings.

This Research Strategy should be read in the context of several other key College policies and documents including:

- The Strategic Plan
- The Distinctiveness Statement
- The Learning and Teaching Strategy
- The Staff Development Policy
- The Code of Practice for Research Ethics
- The College's response to the TEF
- The REF2021 and Code of Practice on the selection of staff

It is designed to be an overarching strategy, which draws together relevant themes and key activities in order to support and enhance research within the College, and is centrally informed by sectoral developments.

The College Strategic Plan 2017-2022 recognises the important contribution research makes to the life of the College. Its Mission Statement concludes: "As the College embraces the changes caused by reduced government funding and HE legislative changes, the fallout of Brexit, and wider competition from new providers entering the HE market, the College aims to set a strategic course that takes us to a higher level of achievement and sustainability through a number of committed steps." (p.3)

The first of these "committed steps" states: "To broaden and transform our curriculum, create an environment that promotes distinctive research and excellent teaching and extend our collaborative provision with national and international partners." (p.3)

The Strategic Plan advances a further commitment: "To ensure a supportive working environment for all staff with an improved work/life balance and opportunities for career development." To address staff workload and development the College will: "Review the workload balance of academic staff between teaching, research, administration and external engagements." (p.8)

The Research Strategy is integral to the Strategic Plan and outlines the steps the College will make over the next five years to fulfil its mission underpinned by the following principles, aims and objectives:

The principle underlying the College's research activities is Practice Research, including that which is either based on or informed by: reflection on and analysis of historical material, the creation of original work, notions of methodology and process, or captured experientially in the rehearsal room, laboratory or playing space, either actual or virtual; and manifest in a variety of forms including print and digital publication, exhibition, installation and performance.

The aim is to establish a sustainable, inclusive and ethical research environment in relation to the College’s Strategic Plan.

The strategy establishes a set of objectives as deliberate action at an institutional level, which develop and advance the College’s research culture. It is through the implementation of these objectives that the College seeks to meet the underpinning principles of the College’s mission.

The objectives are to:

1. Produce internationally-recognised research outputs with appropriate dissemination;
2. Build capacity through doctoral and masters programmes, developing early career researchers and new researchers, and continuing to support established research active staff;
3. Maximise institutional possibilities for Impact with underpinning research in a number of tightly focussed projects in a variety of arenas;
4. Further embed research in the curriculum;
5. Work with partners in academe of international standing and also the industry at local, national and international level;
6. Source and secure external and/or matching funding, and devise plans for generating earned income;
7. Realise the potential of the College facilities and plant – theatres, studios, lighting labs, digital suite, scenic workshop, design rooms, wardrobe, production offices, rehearsal spaces, archives and collections – to develop a laboratory for practice research as a resource for practitioners and scholars at all levels locally, nationally and internationally;
8. Build on our developing research degree partnership with the University of East London.

A SWOC analysis is provided in Appendix 1 which relates in summary to the detailed objectives set out below.

Objective 1
To produce internationally-recognised research outputs with appropriate dissemination.
We will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw on the achievements and experience of REF2014, and ensure that all aspects of the research strategy are informed by the recommendations of the UOA35 Sub-panel report; • Institute peer review within the College across all disciplines in order to gauge the quality and appropriateness of outputs, and invite externality when appropriate; • Formulate a REF Strategy through the establishment of a REF Strategy Group which reports to the Research Committee.
Milestones/KPIs:
For internal consumption.

Objective 2

To build capacity through doctoral and masters programmes, developing early career researchers and new researchers, and continuing to support established research active staff. A context for training and mentoring staff in research imperatives and skills will be established to enable capacity building.

We will:

- Ensure support for staff through flexibility within deployment;
- Encourage the development of staff in research activity through mentoring and engagement in group/team projects;
- Clarify the relationship between teaching and research and the opportunities for research engaged teaching and pedagogical research;
- Assist staff in placing research in appropriate areas of dissemination in the public domain;
- Provide internal funding from a variety of sources to enable staff to engage in individual and group research (e.g. to cover teaching remission, contributions to conferences), and seek external funding where appropriate;
- Continue with the programme of internal research seminars throughout the academic year establishing a more formal approach to framing and presenting research.

Milestones/KPIs

For internal consumption.

Objective 3

To maximise institutional possibilities for Impact with underpinning research in a number of tightly focussed projects in a variety of arenas.

We will:

- Emphasise the importance of the annual Symposium as a research platform with identified deliverables for all staff, students and research associates of the College including Visiting Professors, and increase its audience beyond the institution;
- Continue to develop industry links to enable reciprocally beneficial research and development activity;
- Identify partnerships, associations and/or collaborations to develop impactful outcomes beyond HEIs.

Milestones/KPIs:

For internal consumption.

Objective 4:

To further embed research in the curriculum.

We will:

- Define the relationship between research and the curriculum in each discipline/programme to enable staff to centre and advance research in specific areas of teaching, recognising that the learning environment is enriched by linkages between teaching and scholarship, research and professional practice;
- In alignment with the TEF, promote research-led teaching;

- Ensure the use of the Archives and Collections within the curriculum including productions and projects in both specialised and shared areas of learning;
- Include where appropriate research as a desirable characteristic in specific requirements of certain staff appointments.

Milestones/KPIs:

For internal consumption.

Objective 5:

- To work with partners in academe and the theatre and live performance industries at local, national and international level.

We will:

- Set up a consortium of like institutions and departments to share ideas and good practice, and promote practice research more widely amongst academe, industry and funding bodies;
- Identify established and new partners beyond UK HEIs e.g. DAMU, VSMU (Slovakia), University of Malta, The Lir/Trinity College Dublin, V&A, Prague Quadrennial, ROBE;
- Continue to organise study days, expert seminars, symposia, conferences and other research related events to provide platforms to initiate, develop and disseminate research.

Milestones/KPIs

For internal consumption.

Objective 6:

To secure external and/or matching funding from a variety of sources including sponsorship and corporate support; and generate earned income through study days, masterclasses, residencies and other research related events, to supplement QR grant.

We will:

- Develop collaborative research projects with staff at other higher education institutions and to submit joint research funding bids;
- Identify, with the Head of Development, suitable sources of funding and to work with staff to apply for funding e.g. ACE, ERASMUS, AHRC, The Leverhulme Trust, ROBE, The Esme Fairbairn and Paul Hamlyn Foundations, V&A, ECF;
- Establish a number of initiatives to generate earned income.

Milestones/KPIs:

For internal consumption.

Objective 7:

Realise the potential of the College facilities and plan to develop a laboratory for practice research as a resource for practitioners and scholars at all levels locally, nationally and internationally.

We will:

- Form professorial and doctoral groups to enable discussion and provide focus for elements of the research strategy and research profile in order to clarify and consolidate current practice, and advance further development;
- Review: the overarching framework of Centres and Hubs (areas of critical mass) within which research is located to ensure their structure and internal organisation aligns with the objectives of the research strategy, and appropriately facilitates its implementation; and the current infrastructure of the Research Office to determine how it can operate efficiently and effectively in the future, particularly with regard to preparation for the next REF;
- Recognise the commercial potential of resources/assets connected to research to provide revenue for research activity.

Milestones/KPIs

For internal consumption.

Objective 8:

To build on our developing research degree partnership with the University of East London.

We will:

Build on the partnership with UEL colleagues with regard to new initiatives, mutual support and reciprocal benefit in a number of areas of shared interest.

Milestones/KPIs

For internal consumption.

The Research Strategy 2017 – 2022 is a dynamic document that will be reviewed and amended accordingly by the Research Committee at the end of each academic year.

An operational plan will be considered and approved by the Research Committee at the beginning of each academic year to ensure that the Research Strategy's Milestones and KPIs are met.

Research audits are ongoing throughout each year and received regularly by the Research Committee. These itemise projects under each Centre's aegis and individual outputs related to conference papers and presentations (a repository of these is in preparation), print and digital publications, installations, exhibitions, workshops and performance; as well as activities with relevant national and international professional bodies.

Regarding Research is a newsletter disseminated through *Theatre Futures* and available in print in the Library which gives details of staff contributions to the College's Research Seminars and other current activities of interest.

Appendix 1: SWOC Analysis

Strengths (Internal)	Weaknesses (Internal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of REF2014; • Partnerships with Industry; • Partnerships with other HEIs and IROs nationally and internationally; • Practice research and scholarship is actively supported and promoted within the College; • The Staff Development Policy sets out clear information regarding support for internal and external opportunities for development; • Interdisciplinary research approaches to teaching and research; • Longstanding institutional reputation for research into performing arts pedagogy; • College is the base for The Stanislavski Centre and <i>Stanislavski Studies</i>; • Projects within Centres have national and international standing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An institutional hesitancy to consider research as central to the College's academic and professional life; • Institutional restructuring and its effect on programmes and staffing and, consequently, the time and space for individual and collaborative research; • Resolving the definition of 'research active staff' as indicated in the Stern Review and its implications for the institution regarding submission to the REF and existing and revised contracts; • Limited resources to create a cohesive environment in which to develop a sustainable research culture; • Inadequate infrastructure specific to the efficient operation of the Research Office/Department and good practice in enabling, supporting, disseminating and promoting individual, collaborative and institutional research.
Opportunities (Outside RBC)	Challenges (from Outside RBC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the College profile nationally and internationally; • Establish the institution's distinctiveness as a conservatoire in a university context; • Lead nationally/internationally on areas of practice research particular to the institution; • Advance/promote the research output of individual staff in a variety of arenas; • Enable reciprocal and mutually beneficial activities with the profession, industry and other educational establishments; • Attract external funding including grants, sponsorship and corporate support; • Create an infrastructure that will develop the potential of the College's research resources including OERs, online and print publications, the archives and collections, and its plant; • Potential to develop postgraduate provision should TDAP be awarded; • Building on the relationship with UEL regarding research degrees further opportunities will arise for research collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College's ability to achieve the appropriate balance between aspiration/growth and reality/practicality in the light of the removal of institutional-specific funding; • Brexit and its implications for European funding sources; • Reduction of QR funding; • Consideration of national and international political situations on institutional policy.

Appendix 2: TDAP 2016 Report (extracts)

All staff, academic, visiting and administrative, are able to apply for internal funding to support their research, scholarly activity, and vocational or professional practice. (p. 3)

Para 143: The team noted individual examples of pedagogic research initiatives including HEA-funded projects related to student learning and teaching, JISC/HEA funding to develop an Open Educational Resource for the sector, and evidence of recently published work, of which some focuses on pedagogy. (p.34)

Para. 145. The College demonstrates the integration of research and advanced scholarship with teaching and learning through accounts of research and scholarship activities and the range of academic staff outputs produced relevant to their discipline. Staff are engaged in a range of external activities at subject level, including serving on editorial boards and acting as peer reviewers for publications and publishers. In addition, staff engage actively with professional practice, for example in laboratory/workshop events, and both external and College-based symposia. (p. 34)

Para. 146 Nine academic staff have PhDs, and a majority produce research and scholarly publications, including articles, book chapters, books and other relevant outputs. The College's approach to research reflects its identity as a small specialist provider of higher education in theatre and performance, with practice research as its underlying principle. Research objectives include the production of internationally recognised research outputs (pp. 34-5)

Para. 150 The steps taken by the College to develop a research strategy encompassing these various objectives reflect its strong commitment to build on existing research strength and ambition and to grow its profile in research, scholarship and professional practice. The activity of the College's five research centres provides further evidence of a structure designed to enable and encourage research and scholarship across the institution and with external partners. Activities include interdisciplinary projects, research seminars and lectures, workshops and study events. (p. 35)

Appendix 3: QAA Higher Education Review 2014 Report (extract)

Para. 2.15. Through its active involvement in and relationships with the industry, arts organisations and educational establishments, the College identifies research, scholarship and professional practice as key to its institutional identity, and promotes and develops this through a culture of reflection and subject-based scholarship.

Para. 2.18. Programmes embed professional practice through a variety of means, including placements, internships, practice-based learning with specialist practitioners, research within professional practice, involvement in productions, and professional preparation and development modules.

Para. 2.19. Staff are actively involved in research, scholarship and professional practice which makes a positive contribution to the students' learning experiences. Staff and students come together for the annual Symposium which showcases research and collaborative and creative work across the disciplines over the period of a week each year.

Para. 2.20 Through its research website, the College details the work of its five research centres, which support the development of staff research and scholarly activity through projects and collaborations, lectures, seminars and continuing professional development workshops, many of which involve external bodies and external partners. The review team heard from staff that the

culture of practice-based research and scholarship is actively supported and promoted within the College. The Staff Development Policy sets out clear information concerning support for staff through internal events and external opportunities for development.
