School of Languages and Cultures Research Strategy

The School Research Strategy aims to foster excellence in language-based research in a range of disciplines. It encourages both individual and collaborative research projects. It seeks to maximize the benefits gained from the specificity of research in each of the School’s constituent departments, based in a language or a language group, while reaping the added value to be gained from comparative exchange and collaboration across the School.

The encouragement and management of research in the School is the responsibility of the SLC Director of Research and Innovation (DRI) in collaboration with Heads of Departments and the Head of School. The DRI is supported by the School Research Support Group which s/he chairs and which consists of representatives of each research department with consultative members representing the different Research Clusters.

Two structures were put in place in 2009-10 to facilitate the exchange of ideas across the School, identify thematic or methodological common ground across different language-based areas, and encourage collaboration: School Research Seminars; and Research Clusters. These complement the existence of Departmental seminars and research groups.

School Research Seminars are held 3-4 times a semester. These usually consist of two speakers, one external and one internal, on complementary themes representing research in different language-based areas.

School Research Clusters
Research Clusters are conceived as School-wide umbrellas that identify areas where there are research interests shared across the School. Their function is to:

- organize and encourage research in order to capitalize on the opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, interdepartmental research supervision, and group funding bids afforded by the greater volume and breadth offered by a School-wide research culture (as compared to individual departmental cultures).
- describe and explain externally the nature and range of research conducted in the School, including for marketing to potential postgraduate students, in internal and external funding applications, and in the REF.

The following cross-School clusters were proposed and broadly accepted:
  - Visual Cultures, Film, and Performance
  - The Literary Text and its Context
  - Gender Studies, Identity and Sociology
  - Manuscript Studies and Editing
  - Linguistics
  - Intellectual History and Politics
  - Cultural History
  - Postcolonial and Migration Studies
Not all departments need necessarily be represented in all clusters. Individuals may contribute to more than one cluster. The range of clusters must facilitate and support research development, therefore they will be reviewed periodically as staff research develops, and to reflect staffing changes.

**Research Income Generation**
All members of staff on Academic or Research contracts are encouraged to make one major external grant application a year either individually or collaboratively. The School is supported by the University’s Research and Innovation Services in identifying funding opportunities, mediating collaborations across the university and with other institutions, and preparing applications.

The School works closely with the Humanities Research Institute in order to respond to and shape the changing research culture in Modern Languages, nationally and internationally, arising from the growing importance of Information Technology for research process and outcome.

**Knowledge Exchange and Public Engagement**
The School takes seriously the need for External Engagement, recognizing the strong track record and further potential of Modern Languages research in regard to opportunities for Knowledge Exchange and engagement with communities beyond academia.

**Update March 2012** (agreed by SRSG and SEB and School Forum)

**Annual Review of Individual Research**

*Purpose:* to gather information to enable us to support individual research and provide targeted advice on grant opportunities, publication strategy etc; highlight successes and achievements; promote collaborations and exchange across the School; develop a School research strategy that is responsive to staff interests as they develop; inform the HoS’s and Director of Research’s input into University initiatives and funding.

*Reporting:* Every member of staff with research in their contract is required to submit a report on their research annually, indicating achievements and plans. This should take the form of a version of the research sections of your SRDS (edited to exclude any confidential information) and is to be submitted at the same time. The reports will be collected by the research secretary; the HoD/HoS and DRI will have access to them. They are to be used purely in a supportive way as above, i.e. to inform School/individual participation in University initiatives and opportunities.
Research meetings:
Every member of staff with research in their contract is strongly recommended to discuss their current research and future plans (such as publication plans, external funding applications, potential for ‘impact’ etc) at least once a year. The aim of this meeting is to support and advise individuals in maximizing the potential of their research. Staff are invited to initiate this meeting by approaching their chosen advisor/mentor from a list of experienced colleagues from across the School who have agreed to act in this capacity. This may, but need not necessarily be, a colleague in your own department. In some cases you may consider it more helpful to hold this meeting with a fellow member of a Research Cluster. If you need help in identifying an appropriate advisor, for example if you are new to the School, please feel free to ask your HoD or the SLC Director of Research and Innovation to advise on your choice.

These meetings are voluntary and are intended to be entirely advisory and supportive. No record will be held of the content of these meetings aside from a note that they took place (names of participants, date).

Staff who do not have research in their contract but who currently conduct research or who plan to do so are very welcome to participate in this scheme by requesting an advisory meeting. (They are, of course, exempt from the requirement above to submit a written report but may choose to provide their advisor with notes to form the basis of discussion.)