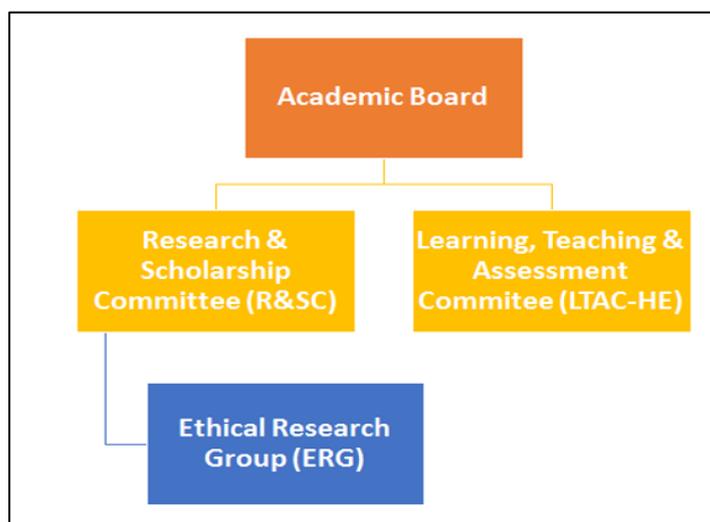


## University Centre at Blackburn College

### Aligning Supported Research & Scholarship activities with the Blackburn College Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy

#### ***Academic Governance & Committee Structure at Blackburn College and UCBC***

The following University Centre at Blackburn College (UCBC) organisational and committee information is provided to contextualise and frame the more specific details contained in this Case Study. UCBC is one of the larger providers of Higher Education within the further education sector (FE), with a higher education (HE) student population of approximately 3000 students, amounting to approximately 2500 full-time equivalents.<sup>1</sup> The flow chart – below – highlights the committee structures currently in place at UCBC to deal with and represent the academic interests of learners and academics. The committee with overall responsibility for academic decisions and initiatives at Blackburn College is the Academic Board. As is highlighted below, the Research & Scholarship Committee (RSC), in tandem with the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee Higher education (LTAC-HE) reports to Academic Board. The institutional Ethics Committee (or Ethical Research Group), reports to the RSC. All of the respective Committees operate within parameters and responsibilities as set out as part of their respective Terms of Reference.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> These numbers place it in the top three higher education providers in the English further education sector and means that it has a higher education student body larger than the 30 smallest institutions in the UK higher education sector, including the 6 smallest universities.

<sup>2</sup> It is pertinent to point out here that the above flow chart identifies the Higher Education / UCBC focused committee structures, (which ultimately report to Academic Board); Blackburn College also has an array of Further Education focused committees, which operate to different Terms of Reference, and also report to Academic Board.



### ***LTAC-HE: Establishing the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy***

During the latter stages of the academic year 2014-2015 and the initial part of the 2015-2016, Dr Steve Wright (Academic Registrar), in conjunction with Paul Kellett (Director of HE Quality) lead a team of academics and managers, tasked with producing a robust and institutionally connected 'Teaching, Learning & Assessment strategy' (TLAs). In order to formulate an early draft of the TLAs, the following committees and groups of staff were consulted:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee – Further Education (TLAC-FE)
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee – Higher Education (LTAC-HE)
- UCBC School Boards;
- Research and Scholarship Committee (RSC)
- Student Engagement Team
- Blended Learning Team Inclusive Studies and Disability
- Students' Union (NUS)
- Employer representatives

As a member of LTAC-HE and as Vice-Chair of the RSC, the Research & Scholarship Leader (RSL), Dr Craig Hammond, through the RSC, other informal staff networks, and, through continued collaboration with the LTAC-HE working group, shaped the *research and scholarship* segment of the TLA Strategy. The collaborations and consultations emanating from the wider LTAC-HE working group, produced the following key areas (or strategic directives) which served to inform and shape the final draft of the TLAs:

1. Developing Teaching and Facilitating Learning
2. Improving Assessment and Feedback Practice
3. Supporting and Engaging Learners
4. Using Technology-Enhanced Learning
- 5. Scholarship and Applied Research**
6. Curriculum Selection, Design and Development
7. Deliberative Processes

Whilst acknowledging the wider context and consultative framework of the TLAs, this Case Study will focus on the development and rolling out of the *Scholarship and Applied Research* section of the TLAs. The 'Scholarship and Applied Research' section of the TLAs (highlighted above), set out the following Research & Scholarship (R&S) related *strategies*:



- Maintain an active Research and Scholarship Committee with access to dedicated funding to deploy in support of staff and student research and scholarly activity.
- Develop learning communities of staff that bring together their subject and pedagogic interests and expertise so as to share and disseminate knowledge and share best practice.
- Continue to inform our curricula through research, professional and scholarly activity in a deliberate and systematic manner.
- Enable learners to have the opportunity to undertake enquiry-based and research-orientated activity appropriate to their programmes of study.
- Celebrate learners' success through the creation of opportunities for learners to disseminate and publish research-orientated and other scholarly outputs arising from their study.
- Celebrate research learners' successes through the creation of opportunities to disseminate and publish research.

### ***Research & Scholarship Committee: Applications, Support and the TLA Strategy***

Part of the remit and role of the RSL is to develop a transparent and supportive process, to encourage UCBC academic staff (and 'staff-sponsored' students) to submit applications for R&S initiatives and activities. The 2015-2016 R&S budget and application process is geared towards supporting academic staff and students to submit and present papers at conference, or, to request remission to conduct institutional or external research activities.

In order to target the TLAs priorities, the R&S application form was adjusted to include a new set of weighted criteria, which specifically identify and support the TLAs priorities. During October 2015, the RSL via the RSC proposed and established the following additional TLAs criteria (see the blue shaded criteria on the left-hand side of the grid below); these have been included as part of all subsequent R&S applications.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In order to avoid a 'stampede' for hours and remission support at the beginning of the academic year, applications for support have been staggered across the academic year; a total of 6 separate application points have been/are available for UCBC staff across the academic year 2015-2016.



<b>TLA Aligned Criteria</b>	<b>No. of Supported Applications 'Hitting' TLA Criteria</b>
Identify ways in which your proposed activity contributes effectively towards developing disciplinary and pedagogic expertise. (2 points)	Out of 41 separate applications (supported so far – between October 2015 and April 2016):  36 hit this TLA criteria: a total of 87.8% of supported applications
Identify ways in which your proposed activity continues to inform UCBC curricula through research, professional and scholarly activity in a deliberate and systematic manner. (2 points)	Out of the 41 separate applications (supported so far – between October 2015 and April 2016):  37 hit this TLA criteria: a total of 90.2% of supported applications
In what ways (if any) does your proposed activity enable student opportunities to undertake enquiry-based and research-orientated activity? (2 points)	Out of the 41 separate applications (supported so far – between October 2015 and April 2016):  30 hit this TLA criteria: a total of 73.17% of supported applications
In what ways (if any) does your proposed activity create opportunities for students to disseminate and/or publish their outputs? (2 points)	Out of the 41 separate applications (supported so far – between October 2015 and April 2016):  15 hit this TLA criteria: a total of 36.58% of supported applications

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