



Research Strategy – Department of Psychology

Vision (max 200 words)

Psychology in Durham is nationally and internationally recognised for our research in Behavioural and Cognitive Neuroscience, Developmental Science, and Quantitative Social Psychology. We aim to continue producing world-leading research and to translate this into world-leading impact in an environment that is open and welcoming to all. Our vision is:

“To be an open, diverse and vibrant scholarly community that produces world-leading psychological science and translates this research into world-leading impact in health, welfare and sustainability at the individual and societal level.”

Departmental strengths are:

- Reputation: Sustained position in the Top 100 Psychology departments in the world
- World-leading expertise and facilities for research in perception, attention and awareness
- World-leading research and outstanding facilities in behavioural neuroscience and neurophysiology
- Internationally recognised leadership in the field of neurodiversity, in research and practice
- World leading expertise in social psychology and behavioural science, which feeds into consultancy services focused on understanding and influencing human behaviour.
- Implementations of EDI values in all operational aspects of the department (see Athena Swan Award)
- Award winning technical team to support research

Strategic Research Themes and Priorities

<p>Theme 1: Health and Wellbeing. This cross-cutting theme represents our multidisciplinary strength in health and wellbeing at many levels of analysis (from neuron to society). The theme maps onto a key UKRI priority of health and aligns with the NHS long-term plan priorities of Healthy Aging including dementia, stroke, learning disabilities and autism and feeds into world leading basic science, strong impact and the implementation of EDI values into our research.</p> <p>Within this theme we have identified priority areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stroke, sensory-motor impairment and neurodegenerative disease (e.g. Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s Disease) • Mental health and psychological wellbeing in neurotypical and neurodiverse people • Promoting healthy, inclusive and sustainable ways of living 	<p>Theme 2: Perception What are the mental and neural processes underpinning the ability to experience, explore and interpret the world? This theme represents our long-standing world-leading expertise in the fundamental science of perception, attention and awareness.</p> <p>Within this theme we have priority areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention and Action • Multisensory perception & plasticity • The visual brain • Social perception
---	--

<p>Theme 3: Diversity in emotional and cognitive development How do the brain and mind develop through infancy, childhood and into adulthood? This theme reflects our world leading expertise in developmental science, which takes a neurodiverse, multi-disciplinary approach which reflects the importance EDI values in our research and the translation of high-quality research into practice.</p> <p>Within this theme we have priority areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting a neurodiverse and inclusive society. • Cognitive, perceptual and motor development • Cross-cultural and Comparative Developmental Psychology 	<p>Theme 4: Learning and Memory How do the brain and mind form long term memories and what happens when these systems malfunction? This theme reflects two related areas of excellence. Firstly, our expertise in reward learning theory in human and non-human animals. Secondly, the role of the hippocampus in long term memory in Alzheimer's disease and healthy aging.</p> <p>Within this theme we have priority areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical models of reward learning • Neurophysiology of the hippocampus
<p>Theme 5: Application of Social Psychology to policy and behaviour change Global challenges such as climate change, the C19 pandemic and global obesity demonstrate the necessity of developing effective tools for behavioural change in individuals, groups and communities.</p> <p>Within this theme we have priorities of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Nudge' as a tool for behaviour change • Human factors in promoting environmental sustainability and healthy lifestyles • Leadership, power and change • Promoting healthy lifestyles 	<p>Theme 6: Intergroup, Intragroup & EDI processes We exist in multicultural societies, which leads to the challenges of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within (intergroup) and between (intragroup) groups, eliminating prejudice and discrimination and increasing social cohesion. To address these challenges, we are advancing the understanding of the biological, psychological and social mechanisms underpinning our social identities. In doing so, we are leveraging our knowledge to reduce inequality in societies, which feeds into our EDI mission</p> <p>Within this theme we have priorities of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interactions & Isolation • Identity, Morals and Values • Stereotyping, Biases and Discrimination

Aims and Indicators of Success

Aims	Strategy into action: Critical initiatives	Success indicator
<p>1: INCOME Increase and diversify research grant capture with a target of annual grant income in line with the median of Russell Group Psychology departments (62k per FTE 2021/22)</p>	<p>Submit ESRC Centre bid for Neurodiversity & Development Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently in development with target of submission in 2026/7 <p>Investment in major interdisciplinary laboratory facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared MRI research facility with DDTVW, sited in Durham City 	<p>Short term indicators Completion of LSSU redevelopment by end 2023</p> <p>A 20% annual increase in grant income, which is required to hit the 62k per FTE target for 2027-2028</p> <p>Preparation and submission of at least one high quality bid to Horizon Europe by end AY2025/26</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete refurbishment of LSSU <p>Reduce Staff Student Ratio to a level more in line with other Russell Group Psychology departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychology SSR is currently ca 1:20, as compared to RG average of ca 1:16. This has strong effects on UK league tables, affects decisions on RL, and is a high risk for our degree accreditation with the British Psychological Society <p>Create opportunities for grant writing via research leave, resources for writing retreats, and dedicated research time.</p> <p>Increased allocation of resources for internal peer review to afford more opportunities for early peer review and development of grants.</p>	<p>Psychology led four £1m+ applications in the last REF reporting period. The target is for Psychology PI's to lead on at least 4 £1m+ applications per academic year during the next REF period</p> <p>All eligible staff to have taken at least 1 term of Research Leave by end of 2024/ 2025</p> <p>Increased number of grant applications to average of 1 per year per FTE (on Research & Scholarship track) by end of 2025/2026</p> <p>Medium term indicators: Acquisition of MRI scanner at University Hospital of North Durham</p> <p>Submission of ESRC centre bid for Centre for Neurodiversity in the next round (likely 2026/27)</p> <p>Preparation and submission of further DTC bids</p> <p>Long term indicators: Increased number of 4* outputs eligible for next REF</p> <p>Increased number of PGR students and DDTFs</p> <p>Increased citations</p> <p>Improved position in REF2029</p>
<p>2: OUTPUTS: Improve the quality of outputs to increase the proportion of 4* outputs to >52% (the upper quartile for UoA4 in 2021) and reduce the 2* tail to 0.</p>	<p>Research Grants tend to produce the best, highest quality outputs. Addressing income generation by external grant capture (see INCOME) is therefore the most direct way to improve output quality. However, there are other measures we can take to enhance output quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REF output workshops by former panellists to help people understand what 4* outputs look like. 	<p>Short/ Medium term indicators: Host workshops and collate info on producing 4* papers</p> <p>Long term indicators: Increase international reputation through increase in 4* research outputs</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal peer review for papers thought to have potential to be 4* outputs 	
<p>3. PGR STUDENTS Increase the number and quality of PGR students in the department. Russell Group average is 2.67 PGR per FTE</p>	<p>Identify and incentivise colleagues who can lead the development of DTC and other schemes. Themes will be identified via research group sandpits and leaders identified via mentorship and DPC feedback. Potential opportunities already identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSCA Doctoral Network and COFUND Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships (Perception; Group Processes) Wellcome Doctoral Studentships (Health & Wellbeing) Dunhill Medical Trust PhD Studentships (Health & Wellbeing) Alzheimer's Society DTC (Learning & Memory; Health & Wellbeing) BBSRC DTC with Biosciences 	<p>Medium term indicators Preparation and submission of at least one high quality DTC bid by end AY 2025/26</p> <p>Long term indicators Achieve an average of 2.7 PGRs per FTE by 2026/2027</p>
<p>4: IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT Generate between 5 and 7 4* Impact Case Studies for next REF cycle</p> <p><i>Faculty modelling estimates that Psychology will require 4 ICS, but in our view this is an underestimate as it assumes no increase in our FTE from the 2023 number. Given our SSR is ~20 it seems highly unlikely that our FTEs will not increase over the next REF cycle. As only a very small increase in FTE puts us into the next band, we are planning for a requirement of 5-7 4* ICS. We are currently supporting the development of 11 ICS which should give us the</i></p>	<p>DoI to implement a regular 'Impact Café' with input from RIS to provide support and disseminate best practice</p> <p>Communicate expertise and best practice to all academics through workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefings from REF2023 panellists on ICS Engaging REF2023 panellists to review ICS during their development to provide feedback on how to improve Establish and share a bank of 4* ICS from comparator universities (eg. Edinburgh, Exeter, Sheffield) <p>Structural reform to Department policies and processes to support ICS development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising impact activities in DPPC Ensuring WLM captures impact work and further building it into the workload model 	<p>Short / Medium term indicators: Increased number of colleagues involved in impact activities by 2024/2025</p> <p>Increased number of high-quality ICS by 2024/2025</p> <p>Enhanced stakeholder engagement leading to improved quality ICS</p> <p>DoI to ensure all colleagues to have the opportunity to attend an impact Workshop by end of AY 2023/2024</p> <p>Business cases prepared to support ICS and submitted as part of annual planning rounds</p> <p>Ensuring updated ICS work is factored into Workload planning for 24-25 (Jan 24)</p> <p>Long term indicators: 5 or more 4* ICS to select from at next REF</p>

<p><i>scope for selecting the very best for REF 2029</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure Research Committee funding policies to better support impact activities • DoR, DoI and SRA to discuss options for more efficient use of SRA time to support impact projects 	
	<p>Expand impact and engagement by developing businesses cases for key initiatives & ICS evidence collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement: Junior Scientist • ICS: Triple-A • ICS: Hearing Voices • ICS: The Science of Inner Experience (SIE) • ICS: Oxford Visual Perception Screen • ICS: BOLDKids: Motor development in limb differences • ICS: Making public places more sensory inclusive for autistic people • ICS: Diversico • ICS: Echolocation Training 	
	<p>Develop systems to support large-scale data collection from diverse communities outwith the UG population, such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children & infants 2. Local communities 3. Low SES groups 4. Marginal groups 5. NHs patients 	
	<p>More engagement of UG and PGT voluntary RAs in impact activities</p> <p>Leverage the new Partnership Manager to support new links and funding opportunities with external stakeholders from industry, charities, government, etc.</p>	
	<p>Expanding consultancy through establishing a Behavioural Science Clinic. This will be particularly important for generating impact aligned with the Theme 5</p>	
	<p>Establish a University Centre for Behavioural Science Research with</p>	

	the long-term goal of achieving ESRC centre status	
<p>5: Athena Swan Gold Award To embed equality, diversity and inclusion in our day-to-day research and scholarly practice, with a particular focus on generating internationally recognised research and impact, and the ambition to achieve the gold award</p>	Regular departmental research and open science events, including topics that highlight diversity and inclusion (e.g., research seminars, RIOT club)	<p>Short term indicators: Implement the 3rd Athena Swan Silver Award</p> <p>To maintain gender equality in the opportunity to take on senior service and leadership roles</p> <p>All colleagues to have the opportunity to attend internal EDI symposia by end 2024/2025 AY</p>
	Implementation of a mentoring system, with a special focus on early career researchers that acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of new colleagues.	
	Allocating one day per week for research and/or professional development to teaching-only staff	<p>Long term indicator: Achieve Athena Swan Gold</p>
	Including contract research and teaching-only staff in the full range of departmental initiatives.	
	Internal symposia on EDI and embedding into research and decolonisation drawing on internal expertise	
	Implementing the plans set out in the recently successful AS silver award application.	
Use our expertise in EDI research to advise and promote change in the higher education sector through activities such as collaborations with international partners (e.g. Tübingen and attending HE EDI related conferences.		
<p>6: REPUTATION To raise the international profile of Durham Psychology and increase the citations of Psychology research from DU</p>	<p>Attract leading scholars & major conferences to Durham University by hosting national society meetings, workshops and major international conferences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, the International Multisensory Research Forum will be hosted by Psychology and will attract ~250 delegates from across the world in 2025 <p>Encourage colleagues to include funds for workshops/meetings in grant applications</p>	<p>Short Term Indicators: Increased numbers of conferences organised at DU by Dept of Psychology, with at least one major conference by 2025/26</p> <p>Increased global reputation and standing in league tables (e.g. THE/QS)</p> <p>Increased numbers of conferences organised at DU by Dept of Psychology, with at least one major conference by 2025/26</p>

	<p>Some aspects of national conference organisation can be supported by SRA (with discussion with Dept Manager and DoR). Major conference organisation is very time consuming and may be a good target activity for Research Leave</p>	<p>Increased global reputation and standing in league tables (e.g. THE/QS)</p>
	<p>Apply for new Global Engagement grants to attract leading scholars to Durham</p>	
	<p>Continue to support attendance at conferences to present research and encourage colleagues to make use of external sources of travel money so that academic staff have the opportunity present their research at one or more national or international conferences or meetings per year.</p>	<p>Long Term Indicators: Increased global reputation and standing in league tables (e.g. THE/QS) Increased citations</p>