GSSS&P FIVE YEAR SCHOOL RESEARCH STRATEGY 2011-2015

Key goals to achieve by 2015

1. Strengthen links between teaching and research
2. Make teaching models and loads more compatible with research
3. Increase the proportion of research active academic staff (RMIT definition) in the school to 80% (in 2009, it was 42%)
4. Increase the school HERDC Publications Score to 250 (it was 159 in 2005, 114 in 2009)
5. Increase research funding by 20% per year
6. Marginally increase number of HDR students in the school and improve school PREQ scores to national average.
7. Make better use of external relationships to enhance research in the school

1. Strengthen links between teaching and research

If there is a zero-sum relationship between teaching and research, the development of a research strategy will fail. This is particularly the case if professional education is seen as an alternative to investing in research. The research strategy needs to demonstrate that it can enrich and transform professional education, both in terms of pedagogy and curricula. A successful research strategy will be one that engages with teaching programs and helps them construct key questions they confront, in collaboration with community, industry and other external partners. What are the challenges facing these sectors over the coming decade? How is RMIT responding in terms of its professional education? These challenges need to be framed in research terms, so that each programme area is involved in looking to the future of professional education and the issues the different professions are dealing with, and seeing this enriched by research. This could be around the changing nature of social problems that professionals confront [such as the transformation of the life course, economy and culture, reshaping what it means to be young], the introduction of new technologies in the workplace, shifting forms of violence and crime; the changing nature of urban experience, specific challenges of sustainability, urban design etc. Where appropriate, the international aspects of these challenges need to be highlighted.

Activities to assist us to meet these goals:

• Make better use of demonstrated school research strengths in teaching programs.

• Articulate a program of research capacity development in successful teaching areas which do not currently have a significant research output.
• Research centres to play a more integral role in strengthening the research orientation of programs and academics in their clusters.

• Use the proposed CCA renewal process to articulate appropriate research themes, and link them to teaching.

• Each discipline to formulate a research theme and associated puzzles.

• Where appropriate, design student assessment to address core discipline research questions.

• Build later year undergraduate and coursework masters research apprenticeship opportunities into funded research projects.

• Build staff reports on current research projects into curricula.

2. Make teaching models and loads more compatible with research

Traditionally, universities centred on professional education have had considerably more student contact hours, and staff teaching hours, than research intensive universities. At RMIT and elsewhere, teaching improvement has been accompanied by increased intensity of teaching and contact between staff and students. We need to reduce current teaching loads without compromising teaching quality.

Activities to assist us to meet these goals:

• Systematically work towards leaner administrative demands.

• Move to fewer better quality courses taught in any one semester, without adversely affecting program income or employment security of staff.

• Provide time management workshops to identify individual and collective strategies.

• Benchmark with universities that are models for where RMIT hopes to be in 5 years.

3. Increase the proportion of research active academic staff (RMIT definition) in the school to 80% (in 2009, it was 42%)

Currently, less than half HE academic staff are ‘research active’; many have produced no publications or research income for the last ERA exercise. There are several areas in which we teach but in which we have low to very low publications strength [as measured by ERA]. These include 1602 (Criminology), 1701 (Psychology), 1801 (Law & Legal Studies) and 2003 (Language Studies). Conversely, some areas of research strength are not closely linked to teaching programs. We need to build up capacity of all academic staff in the school to work on research, collaboratively for at least some of the time, without compromising their well-being and teaching quality. This will require expanding the current ‘culture change program’ to strategic areas in the school.

Activities to assist us to meet these goals:
- Introduce new research workload planning model to systematically acknowledge and reward research output

- Articulate a program of research capacity development in successful teaching areas which do not have a significant research output.

- In collaboration with RMIT and College R&I, build up research-related in-service training and support for all academic staff.

- Develop routinised support services for ECRs, including research induction, a mentoring program and ECR research leave [funded by the DSC college or the university].

- School Research Committee members to play a more active role in advising colleagues about research funding and training opportunities.

- Senior staff to provide mentoring assistance to ECRs and colleagues who want to build up their research capacity.

- Research centres to convene a regular staff-student research seminar series in their respective clusters

- Strengthen staff participation in international research networks/consortia/projects.

- Establish annual prizes for several categories of research excellence.

4. Increase the HERDC Publications Score to 250 (it was 159 in 2005, 114 in 2009)

Activities to assist us to meet these goals:

- Academic A and B level academic staff members will aim to produce at least one publication or equivalent per year, all staff level C and above at least two.

- Fund and run regular article writing workshops.

- Provide research mentoring assistance to staff that need it.

- Convert all conference papers and contracted research reports into refereed publications.

- Encourage and support HDR students to publish 2 papers during their candidature.

- Increase the number of adjuncts who can contribute to school publication efforts.

5. Increase research funding by 20% per year

- Build up a routine of timely research grant applications

- In collaboration with RMIT and College R&I offices, put in place a peer review panel and editing support for all Category 1 funding applications [ARC, AHURI and other relevant schemes]

- Make further representations to college and university to provide funding for ‘near miss’ research
funding applications

- Strengthen forums to promote interaction around research with key industry partners
- Establish an annual conference between researchers, students and key industry partners, linked to partners’ recruitment strategies
- Identify high-impact and strategic areas for research as a basis for strategic partnerships with industry/government/external organisations

6. **Marginally increase number of HDR students and improve School PREQ scores to national average.**

The school’s acknowledged research strengths give it the capacity to attract excellent HDR candidates, and take advantage of the new RMIT merit-based RTS and scholarship allocation system. In turn, HDR candidates can enhance the school’s research culture and output. However, the School [and RMIT] have done badly on the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire [PREQ] survey, particularly with regard to ‘intellectual climate’ and supervision. This indicates that the school has considerable capacity to increase the happiness – and productivity – of research students.

**Activities to assist us to meet these goals:**

- Invite all HDR students to join one of the research centres or Institutes as associate members
- Establish a cluster-based seminar program that HDR students will be expected to participate in
- Encourage and support HDR students to present a paper at at least one local and one international conference during their candidature.
- Encourage and support HDR students to publish 2 papers during their candidature.
- Include later year HDR students in article writing workshops.
- Secure student participation in key international PhD consortia programs.
- Prioritize HDR student involvement in RMIT International Industry Experience and Research Program (RIIERP) http://www.rmit.edu.au/riierp. [Currently the DSC College is very under-represented in this a priority RMIT area].
- Maintain HDR load at 130 [it has decreased from 150 in 2005 to 118 in 2009], but replace fee-waiver and overdue components of the load [currently around 25%] by funded students.
- Increase international HDR student load to RMIT median [around 25% of HDR students]
- Encourage Honours students and successful coursework masters graduates to compete for RMIT HDR places and scholarships.
- Explore establishing school-based HDR international and equity scholarships funded by donors.
- Commission a report on HDR student experience by Adjunct Professor Lois Bryson
7. **Make better use of external relationships to enhance research in the school**

External relationships are crucially important. Collectively, staff in the school have an extensive range of professional and industry contacts and networks that can assist us in different aspects of research work, from formulating research questions to partnership in research projects. We have to draw on those relationships, and at the same time develop and sustain them.

- Strengthen forums to promote interaction around research with key industry partners.

- Explore convening an annual conference between researchers, students and key industry partners (cost neutral, funded by sponsorship) and linked to recruitment strategies of partners.

- Identify high-impact and strategic areas for research - basis for strategic partnerships with industry/government/external organisations.

- Increase the number of externally funded research fellows linked to teaching programs.

- Increase the number of adjuncts who can contribute to school research initiatives.

- Form international alliances with key research-intensive schools and programs.

- Identify key organizations and individuals for endowments, in particular of research chairs, scholarships, and joint research appointments.

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Tuesday, 14 December 2010