Research & Innovation Strategy

2020 – 2025

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Background

The current pandemic and Brexit is creating a long-term external environment with a unique blend of challenges and opportunities for Universities. Such an environment leads to several emerging guiding principals for strategy formation:

- Growing importance of R&I for the growth and reputational & financial stability of the University

- A rising expectation to work more collaboratively and across academic disciplines

- A need to have clearer alignment with key long-standing government priorities and the VfM we provide in terms of KE outcomes.

- Consideration and increase of our broader impact and contribution as a civic institution in the region

Strategic Aim

R&I strongly underpins the University's growth, reputation and ability to deliver positive social-economic impact. The long-standing aim of this strategy is:

- To foster a sustainable and interdisciplinary research environment that inspires and brings together our academic staff, researchers, students and external stakeholders to solve real world problems.

- Influence professional practice and policy nationally and internationally, driving key societal economic and environmental impacts.

...which will place the University as one of the top modern academic institutions nationally and internationally.

Strategic Alignment

The aims are well aligned to the three pillars of the overarching University Strategy;

'Shaping our Future: Driving Distinctiveness'

Advancing Knowledge

Growing Networks

Building Careers

Enabling objectives

To reach our aim over the next 5-7 years, there are 5 objectives that will need to be achieved. These objectives are stretching, specific and easily measurable. They represent both a very substantial improvement compared to our current position as well as a realistic goal for an institution of our size and ambition.

1 Achievement of min 3* quality profile for REF 2027 with min 400FTE academic staff submitted

2 Sustainable growth of our research and KE income to 15% of our total annual University income

3 Growth of our research student community by at least 50% compared to 2020

4 Development of a significant number of strategic and impactful research and KE external partnerships, spinouts and student start-ups

5 Achievement of an overall research quality profile, incl citations, to position ENU in the top quartile of modern Uni's and top 500 in global rankings

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Strategy Pillars

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1 Increase capability and capacity to deliver high quality and volume of research outcomes and income

2 Grow our research student and ECA opportunities & provide consistent and effective support mechanisms for all academic staff

3 Create an academic culture that has external engagement and KE at its heart, supported through the University Innovation Hub

4 Develop a strategic research focus on key challenge-led academic themes to deliver internationally excellent research and impact in tandem with a research-informed gold curriculum

5 Build strategic international research partnerships to enrich our research environment, grow research capabilities and be established as an internationally excellent academic institution

All underpinned by the four themes: Health, Environment, AI & Technologies and Culture & Communities

Pillar 1

To deliver high quality and volume of research outcomes and income, through a comprehensive framework of academic staff support and targeted investment for new Professorial appointments supported by new Early Career posts and a number of funded PGR studentships.

This approach will strengthen our research environment for REF2027 and provide clear evidence of the University's commitment to support and substantially grow R&I.

Pillar 2

To grow our research student and ECA communities and provide consistent and effective support mechanisms for all academic staff to realise their full academic potential.

This pillar will require;

1. School specific action plans for growing PGR student numbers and ensuring that admissions are effective and timely.

2. A direct link between School plans and resources/infrastructure our PGR community needs to thrive and succeed.

3. A review of effectiveness of support in terms of mentorship, accessibility to school REG funding and workload allocation to help academic staff, in particular ECAs

4. Building of clear personal development plans for academic staff that feed into school and RIE plans.

5. Review our approach to allocating research funds to academics to ensure we are fully robust and transparent in our processes.

Progress Pillar 2: ECA support and Research Students

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ECA Support

- Development of Early Career Academic Framework

- Considering mentoring support for teaching practice and for each academic pathway

Researcher Development

- Retained our HR Excellence in Research Award

- The work focuses on supporting contract research staff and involves initiatives from RIE, HR and DLTE within our new 2yr action plan

PGR

- Working Group paper recommendations approved by SLT

- Several projects now underway to improve student experience and grow student numbers

- PRES survey is now live

COVID-19 Reset Mentoring Scheme

- Launched in Feb21 as a collaboration between QMU and ENU to support researchers deal with impact of COVID-19

Pillar 3

To create an academic culture that has external engagement and knowledge exchange at its heart, supported through the University Innovation Hub, that will deliver external partnerships and sustainable increases in our R&I income stream.

The Innovation Hub will be a key mechanism to:

1. Build an engaging web presence that showcases our expertise and impact
2. Develop a strategic approach to engage with key external sectors, creating opportunities for our academic expertise and to better understand the challenges that businesses and industry face
3. Create a systematic and consistent approach in development, managing and learning from key external relationships
4. Provide our students will clear opportunities to engage in external research and innovation activities
5. Strengthen our PE approach to deliver on our civic mission as a public University

Innovation Hub Website
Showcasing Capabilities and Opportunities to Engage with us

Pillar 4

To develop a strategic research focus on key challenge-led academic themes that will foster an inter-disciplinary approach to delivering internationally excellent research and impact, in tandem with a research-informed gold curriculum.

The University has a long-term focus on wellbeing and sustainability which are underpinned by key societal, business and government goals. The four themes, Health, Environment, AI & Technologies and Culture & Communities all contribute to wellbeing and sustainability.

Pillar 4: Driving Distinctiveness: Challenge-led, multidisciplinary themes

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1. Health
Cardiovascular
Mental Health
Sports Science
Mountain Bike Innovation
Surf Therapy
Biomedical

2. AI & Advanced technologies
Big Data
Artificial Intelligence (AI)
Cyber Security,
Sensors
Internet of Things (IoT)
Robotics

3. Environment
Transport
Sustainable Materials
Biodiversity
Smart Cities
Carbon Neutrality.

4. Culture & Communities
Policing
Public Health
Military Transitions
Creativity & Design
Sustainable and wellbeing-centred communities.

Sustainability and Wellbeing

Progress Pillar 4: Strategic Research Focus

Research Funding Forum

- Monthly Forum established that includes all School Heads of Research and RIE staff

- Funding opportunities of Strategic value considered

- Already met three times and considered funding from Welcome, Nuffield and Leverhulme

- Tangible actions followed up and one outline application has also been made

Strategic fund

- Funding strategic initiatives to ensure transformational actions are delivered:

- Staff buy-out to fund academics to deliver inter-disciplinary activities

- ECR and RPG development and mentoring

- Innovation and Enterprise initiates

- International Research & KE opportunities

Pillar 5

To build strategic international research partnerships to enrich our research environment, accelerate the growth of our research capabilities and establish the University as an internationally excellent academic institution.

This pillar aims to strengthen the University's visibility and R&I networks by:

1. The augmentation of our current TNE partnerships for R&I

2. Development of joint and potentially, virtual research centres to help us explore opportunities in terms of joint PGR supervision, staff exchanges and joint research bids.

We will aim to provide further opportunities for our academic staff to raise their external esteem and increase international awareness of their work through citations.

Progress Pillar 5: International Research Partnerships

Partnerships & Networks

- TNE partnerships
- Student Exchange & Mobility Partnerships
- Existing School International Partnerships
- Existing networks (U!REKA, UKRO, Scotland Europa)
- Historic project related international partnerships

Themes and School areas of research expertise

- Mapping exercise of school areas of research critical mass
- Mapping of staff expertise within themes (for example Health: Cardiovascular; Mental health; Sports Science; Biomedical etc)
- Map research outputs in different regions (web of science)

International Funding opportunities

- Compile list of international funding opportunities
- Utilise our membership of UKRO and Scotland Europa to build on EU funding opportunities.
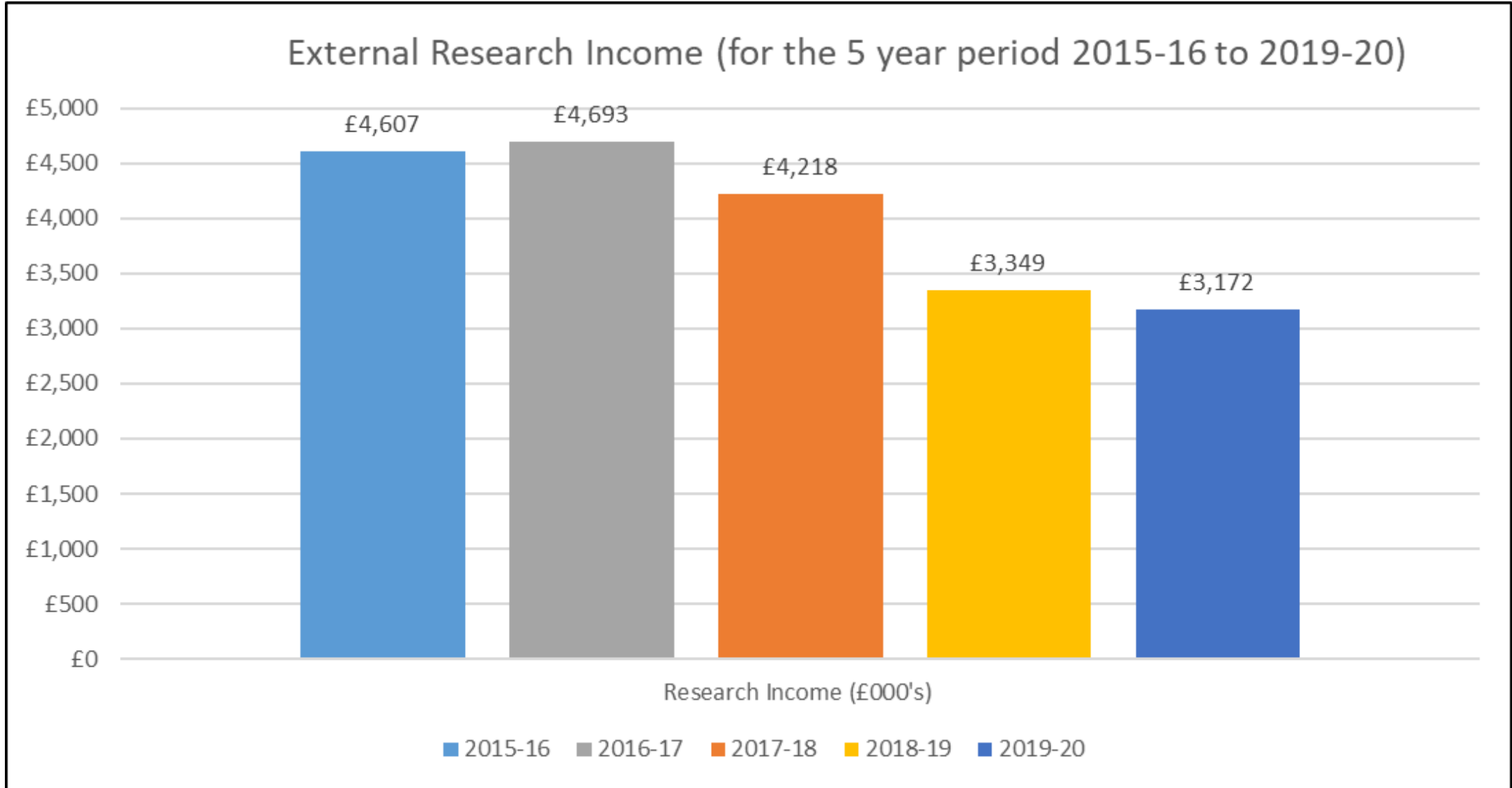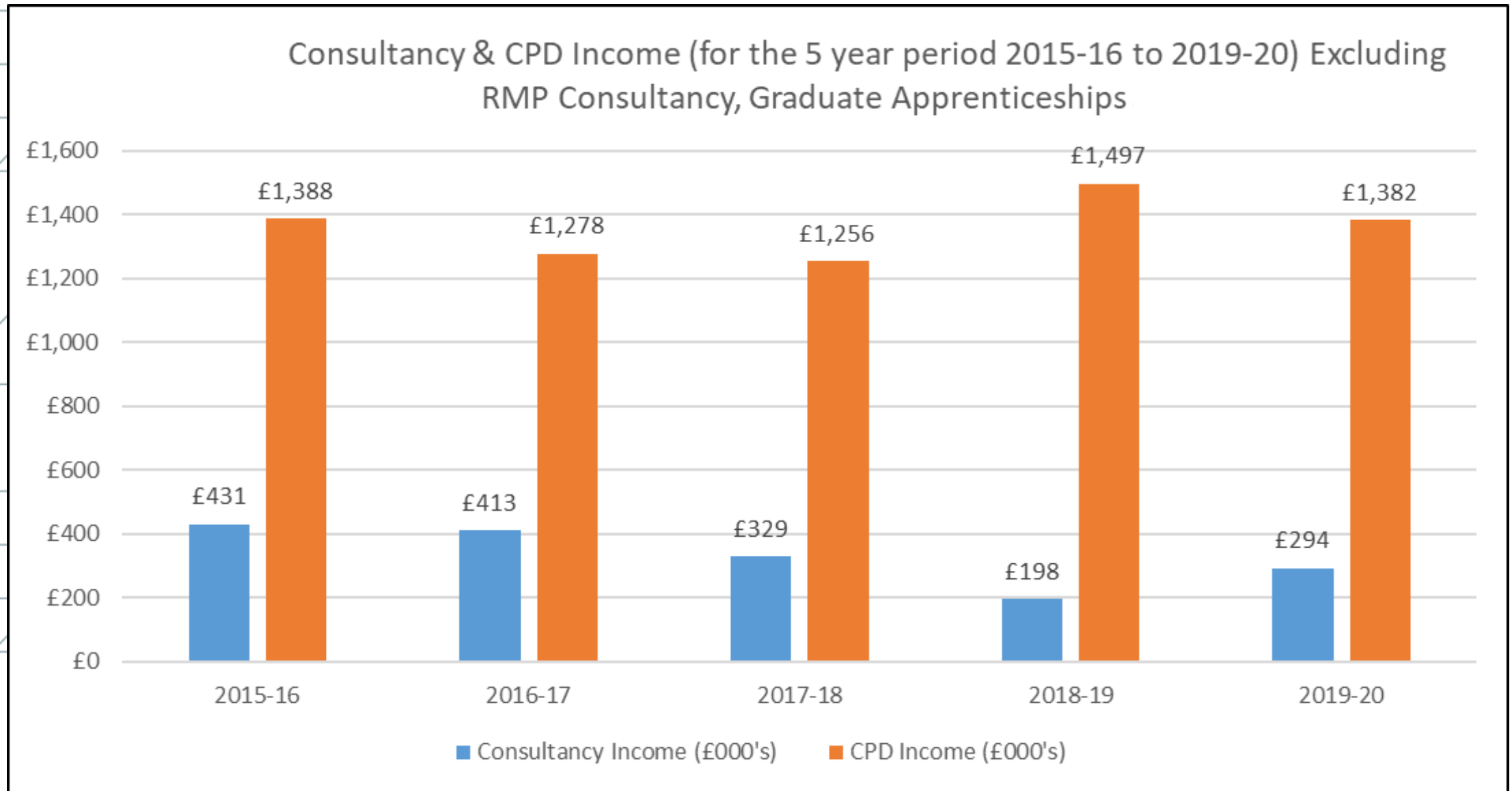- Explore international joint funding & supervision models

Measuring Success

The University-level KPIs for the Research & Innovation Strategy beyond 2020 are:

1 Number of academic staff FTE with one or more outputs at 3* and above for REF2027

2023/24 target: 340FTE

2 Proportion of academic staff engaged in external research and knowledge exchange grants.

2023/24 target: 55%

3 Income from research grants and contracts

2023/24 target: £8.5m

4 Income from Knowledge Exchange (CPD & Consultancy)

2023/24 target: £5.6m

5 Number of Research Postgraduate Students (FTE)

2023/24 target: 255

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External Research Income

External Research Income (for the 5 year period 2015-16 to 2019-20)

Research Income (£000's)

■ 2015-16 ■ 2016-17 ■ 2017-18 ■ 2018-19 ■ 2019-20

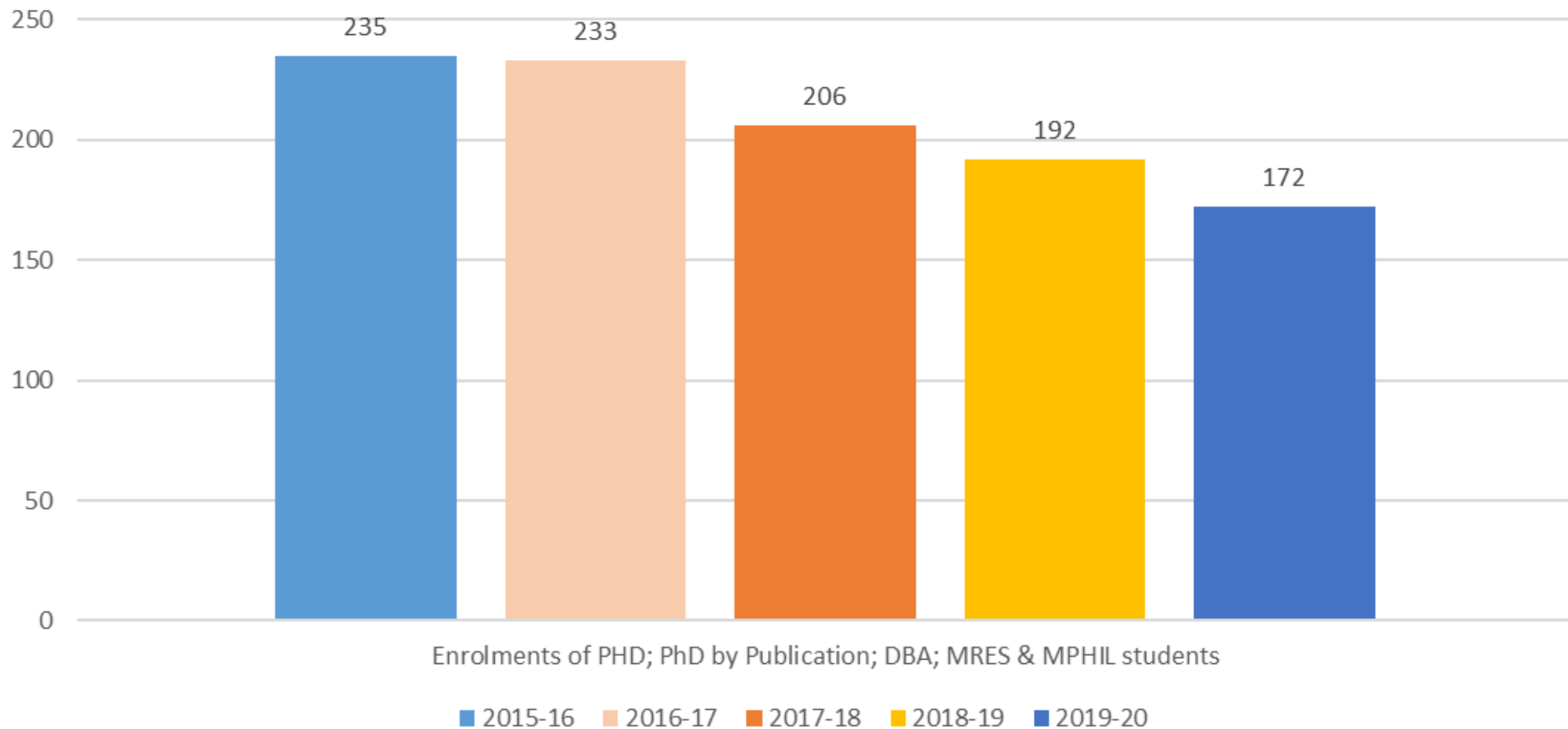Values shown: £4,607 · £4,693 · £4,218 · £3,349 · £3,172

Consultancy & CPD Income

Research Student Enrolments

Standard Research Student FTE enrolments (for the 5 year period 2015-16 to 2019-20)

Enrolments of PHD; PhD by Publication; DBA; MRES & MPHIL students

2015-16: 235
2016-17: 233
2017-18: 206
2018-19: 192
2019-20: 172

REF 2014 to REF 2021

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Key Measure	REF 2014	REF 2021	Increase	Trend
Volume of UoAs submitted	9	13	44%	⬆
Total FTE Submitted ('sigres' staff)	96.9	251.1	159%	⬆
Total No. of outputs submitted	385	631	64%	⬆
Total No. of impact case studies submitted	19	33	74%	⬆
Proportion of research rated 3 or 4 star* **	54%	68%	14%	⬆
GPA of research submitted**	2.6	2.8	8%	⬆

internationally excellent or world-leading

*** 2021 forecast informed by critical friend scoring*

REF Assessment Weighting	REF 2014	REF 2021
Outputs	65%	60%
Impact	20%	**25%**
Environment	15%	15%

REF2027 ambitions
400 FTE staff with one or more 3*
outputs submitted

**REF2021 Evaluation Process /
Lessons-learned project occurring**

Closing Remarks

- Our ambition for R&I is substantial, but realistic, and if achieved, will bring the University to a significant level in its development.

- The KPIs indicate a challenging path ahead over the next few years but, we are starting from a place of strength and have much success to build upon

- Looking forward to working collaboratively together to achieve the goals and ambitions of the R&I Strategy.

Thank you!