

Research Strategy – Westminster Law School¹

‘We will develop a unified, interdisciplinary community of researchers with a vibrant body of PhD students at its heart. Our success will be achieved by researchers and those supporting research working in a seamless partnership.’ (Being Westminster)

Westminster Law School has a strong track record of contextual and impactful research. This includes, and goes beyond, socio-legal spaces and the wider context: social, psychological, ethical, aesthetic, and spatial, for example. We have research centres and groups that showcase our diversity in scholarship. The expertise in the school ranges from law, society and popular culture, the legal profession to European law, public law, international law and development, and legal theory. The school also has strengths in legal methods and encourages inter – trans – and multidisciplinary approaches. This rich palette is a strength and peculiarity of Westminster Law School and feeds into our teaching / learning and contributes to our research identity.²

Inclusivity is part of our wider research philosophy, we celebrate ED&I³ in the Law School – this is reflected by various colleagues at different stages in their careers. We hold regular workshops and research cafes to nurture and cultivate growth, especially for early career researchers by encouraging them to talk about their ideas in a supported environment. The Law School is committed to the ethics of care and through that the wellbeing of students and colleagues.

Our aims:

- ◇ To maintain a vibrant, diverse, and dynamic research community;
- ◇ To embed research within both teaching and knowledge exchange;
- ◇ To contribute to college and University research strategies.

Our objectives:

To place research at the heart of the law school experience as a whole. This means to create a positive place and culture so that all our people, whether established researchers or looking to join the research track (from LLB and beyond), are supported and encouraged to realise their ambition. High quality research needs an enabling environment that promotes and protects that research space. We aim to create an inclusive environment that thrives on the principles of equality and diversity, mutual trust and respect. We strive to include

¹ Inspired by the CLAS and University strategy for research 2018-2023 and valuable input from colleagues at the law school and beyond.

² And translates into REF and KEF submissions

³ EQA 2010 and relevant characteristics generally

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underrepresented groups, especially BAME/BME⁴, in the Law School research strategy and research income/bids.

To that end, the School will:

- Promote a research environment that is supportive, vibrant, inspiring, ambitious and world-leading with a commitment to increase research bids and external support, aspiring toward University targets.
- Embed our research culture throughout the degree and get all our students and post docs engaged in our research life and community.
- Support colleagues through funding applications for projects in the Law School and with external collaborators.
- Strategically grow and develop the research centres and groups that establish our expertise in distinctive fields.
- Grow our research grant applications strategically, in line with the college strategy.

Our commitments:

Researcher development and excellence

The School will foster and nurture a research environment that is vibrant, bold and conducive to high quality outputs, impact activities and grant applications. The School will:

- Do research that matters and make it accessible: Encourage and support seeding new ideas, theoretical, doctrinal as well as applied research, debates and discussions and public outreach activities (student law clinic, lost in music, e.g.).
- Develop our research activity and its impact in our areas of excellence, to double income from research grants, and ensure that 70% of all REF outputs are at 3*/4* level.
- Review on a regular basis that the WAM hours for research, for colleagues with significant responsibilities for research, are honoured in line with university tariffs.
- Support career progression of all colleagues with a specific focus on helping those whose progression is adversely impacted (ie protected characteristics or family circumstances/ socio-economic background/class, paternity).
- Implement the Universities sabbatical policy to meet the research goals of the School.
- Ensure colleagues receive constructive feedback via appraisals, evaluations and peer reviews.
- Offer a mentoring scheme for colleagues.
- Support ECRs and doctoral students through researcher development workshops and mentoring.

⁴ We recognise that the homogenisation of all groups into the acronym of BME/BAME is artificial and does not capture accurately the variety of experiences individuals have or how people might self-identify.

Engagement, teaching and impact

- Encourage and support research-led teaching at all levels.
- Support public engagement and outreach activities to make research meaningful and accessible.

Enhancing our capacities for Interdisciplinarity

Westminster Law School has a strong culture of interdisciplinary research. The School will build on its strength to lead interdisciplinary research within the University and externally. The School will strategically promote interdisciplinary research networks, develop projects, foster research groups, support existing centres and establish new groups within the School, externally as well as within the wider field of law.

Diversity and equality

We have a responsibility to create an inclusive culture to support diverse communities. We will take proactive steps to promote equality and diversity in the law school, especially for colleagues with protected characteristics.

The School will

- provide a supportive environment that helps colleagues with protected characteristics to realize their full potential;
- support colleagues through measures for physical, intellectual as well as social inclusion in the activities of the school at all levels;
- support the career progression of colleagues with protected characteristics.

Global Engagement

The School will engage with the University's objectives to further opportunities to nurture ongoing and new research collaborations:

- Encourage and support colleagues to foster international research networks, partnerships and programmes;
- Develop and sustain alumni networks;
- Encourage and support colleagues to develop research projects, grant applications and exchange programmes with researchers outside the UK;
- Develop a robust research fellowship and visitor programme that facilitate exchange of ideas and collaborations internationally;
- Nurture ongoing research collaborations with global partners;
- Continue to build strong knowledge exchange and engagement activities into our research activities.

Research communities

The University has established four research communities: **Arts, Communication and Culture/ Diversity and Inclusion / Health Innovation and Wellbeing / Sustainable Cities and the Urban Environment**. The School will draw on its varied research strengths and contribute to all four research communities by:

- Promoting participation in the communities;
- Identifying the intersection of law and society as well as policy related issues in all four communities;
- The School will encourage and support colleagues to join research networks and bids for grants within the four research communities;
- The School will contribute to the theoretical as well as practical policy aspects within the thematic communities.

Ethics

The School is committed to ethical good practice in research, and research ethics will be considered and applied throughout the entire research life-cycle. All research in the School will be planned and conducted in accordance with the University Code of Practice Governing Ethical Conduct of Research.

To this end, the School will ensure that colleagues with responsibility for conducting research, for supervising undergraduate or postgraduate student research, and for research governance; are actively encouraged and have access to appropriate training and guidance in research ethics. The School will also ensure that colleagues have access to appropriate and up-to-date training and guidance in: health, safety and wellbeing issues associated with the conduct of research; and obligations concerning data protection and confidentiality.

Law school research committee

The law school research committee meets every three months and is made up of a representative mix of all members of the law school (Profs/Readers/SL/L/VLs/PhD students) with an open invitation to the research office (funding, engagement, impact).

Besides discussing research there will be fixed agenda items for discussion: ethics, diversity, mentorship.

The research committee will allocate the research budget (QR) for research activities, conferences, research clusters / centres. Sub committees will be formed accordingly.