

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 research. This includes, and goes beyond, socio-legal spaces and the wider context: social, psychological, ethical, aesthetic, and spatial, for example. Our expertise stretches from experimental research in legal theory, the legal profession, international and European law, to international development and interdisciplinarity. This rich palette is a strength and peculiarity of the law school and feeds into our teaching and contributes to our research identity.

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.

To that end, the School will:

- Develop a research environment that is supportive, vibrant, inspiring, ambitious and world-leading with a commitment to increase research bids and external support (to work towards the university objective to double grant income by 2023, increase impact, and ensure 70% of all REF outputs are 3*/4).
- Embed our research culture throughout the degree and get all our students and post docs engaged in our research life and community.
- Support staff through funding applications for projects in the law school and with external collaborators.
- Grow and develop the research centres and groups that establish our expertise in distinctive fields.
- Grow our research grant applications in line with the college strategy cognisant of what is possible.

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

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.).
- Ensure work allocations factor in research staff with significant responsibilities for research.
- Implement a sabbatical policy to meet the research goals of the School.
- Ensure staff receive constructive feedback via appraisals, evaluations and peer reviews.
- Offer a mentoring scheme for staff who wish to have a mentor.

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 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 will take proactive steps to promote equality and diversity in the law school, especially for staff with protected characteristics.

The School will

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

Global Engagement

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

- Encourage and support staff to foster international research networks, partnerships and programmes;
- Develop and sustain alumni networks;
- Encourage and support staff 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.

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 socio-legal research strengths and contribute to all four research communities by:

- Participating in the communities;
- Identifying the intersection of law and society and socio-legal approaches as well as policy related issues in all four communities;
- The School will encourage and support staff 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 staff with responsibility for conducting research, for supervising undergraduate or postgraduate student research, and for research governance, have access to appropriate training and guidance in research ethics. The School will also ensure that staff 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

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