



Research Strategic Plan 2015-2017

Introduction

The University of Notre Dame Australia (Notre Dame) is now in its third decade of operation as a university and is guided in the next stage of its planning and development by its Objects, its Canonical Statute, a set of Guiding Principles agreed on by the Trustees of the University and the Board of Directors, and the University's Strategic Plan 2013-2016.

The Objects of The University of Notre Dame Australia are:

The provision of university education within a context of Catholic faith and values; and

The provision of an excellent standard of
i) *teaching, scholarship and research;*
ii) *training for the professions; and*
iii) *pastoral care for its students.*

Notre Dame aspires to pursue excellence in all its academic endeavours with particular reference to and emphasis on its teaching, scholarship and research.

The existing framework for research-related activity at the University, *Research Goals, Targets and Implementation Priorities 2012-2015*, has provided a focus for the University's research investment and endeavours and has guided resource commitments and actions in the research domain.

This *Research Strategic Plan 2015-2017* sets out the priorities for the next three-year period of the University's development and comprises three research objectives with strategies proposed to achieve the objectives. Means of measuring success are indicated for each objective.

Notre Dame's research efforts and support are prioritised in accordance with the Research Focus Areas of the University, namely Indigenous Research, Health, Ethics, Philosophy, Theology and Catholic Education.

Objective 1: Strengthen the University's culture of research and scholarship

As the University moves into the next stage of development, a greater focus is given to the building of an academic community which fosters and supports research activity such that the University, which is currently renowned for its excellence in teaching, can build its research reputation and outputs.

Research Institutes have been established on each of the University's three Campuses and provide leadership in collaborative research initiatives in the University's Research Focus Areas. The Institute for Health Research is located in Fremantle and its purpose is to promote and support

excellence in research at Notre Dame that will improve the physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellbeing of people and communities, particularly those in need. The Broome Campus-based Nulungu Research Institute has as its Vision the provision of excellence in teaching, research and in the valuing of community based Indigenous knowledge. The Institute for Ethics and Society is located in Sydney and aims, through its research agenda, to develop ethical wisdom confirmed by faith to promote action which serves justice, charity and the common good.

The Research Support Services of the University have also been strengthened over the past three-year period and provide an appropriate platform from which to build research culture and activity more broadly.

Strategies:

- Implement defined recognition and rewards for research accomplishments.
- Increase the numbers of existing staff undertaking and completing a doctoral level qualification.
- Increase the number of HDR student enrolments.
- Improve completion times of HDR students.
- Establish clear performance benchmarks for academic staff in relation to their research activity and outputs.
- Implement appropriate mechanisms for academic staff to highlight research expertise and current activity.
- Increase the levels of research support provided by the Research Offices and Schools.
- Encourage and facilitate scholarly teaching and research-informed teaching practices.

Measures:

- Number of staff engaged in research activity.
- Number of academic staff with doctoral level qualifications or working towards the same.
- HDR student enrolments.
- Average completion times for HDR students.
- Number of staff involved in collaborative research projects in the University's Research Institutes/Centres.

Objective 2: Increase the University's Research Activity

Notre Dame seeks to encourage and support all active researchers at the University, strengthen senior research capability and provide development pathways for Early Career Researchers. Increased research engagement at all these levels will directly relate to the growth in the University's research outputs and activity and particular attention will be paid to improvement in publications outputs (both quality and quantity), research income generated and the building of collaboration partnerships with other Australian universities and Research Institutes.

An increase in the University's research activity, particularly its outputs (publications), external grant income, and HDR student completions, will translate into increased Government funding for research via the Research Block Grants Scheme and therefore greater capacity to support research student activity and research services in future.

However, research and researcher quality is assessed not solely via statistics describing outputs and grant income, but by peer/industry assessment in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) quality assurance exercise. Thus attention must be given to the quality of research produced by Notre Dame and particularly in FOR Codes in Human Society, and Medical and Health Sciences, which have been identified in the University's *2014-2016 Compact* as disciplines in which the University has committed to demonstrating substantial improvement.

Strategies:

- Increase the quality as well as quantity of research outputs, particularly in the Research Focus Areas of the University.
- Increase the numbers of Notre Dame-led competitive grant applications.
- Increase the research grant income, particularly from Category 1 and 2 income sources.
- Review funding and support models that can be implemented to support increased research activity.
- Implement a formal mentoring program for Early Career Researchers (ECRs).
- Establish research partnerships with Catholic organisations, both within Australia and internationally, which distinctively reflect elements of Catholic Tradition and Mission, particularly in the fields of Health, Education and Social Welfare.
- Review and benchmark the University's research performance and establish clear targets for future activity.
- Establish appropriate benchmark standards (expectations) for research outputs/activity for all academic staff.
- Ensure relevant Policies, Guidelines and Process documents are regularly reviewed and benchmarked against sector standards.
- Build organisational capacity in supervisory skills.

Measures:

- Total reportable research income to the HERDC.
- Conversions of research activity supported by proportion of internal grants to external grant applications.
- Success rates of Australian Competitive Grant applications.
- Number of reportable publications, particularly in FOR codes in Human Society and Medical and Health Sciences.
- Number of staff involved in University-wide mentoring programs for ECRs.
- Number of staff engaged in HDR supervision.
- Number and impact of research collaborations with external partners, including other Australian universities and leading Catholic universities internationally.

Objective 3: Increase the Quality and Extent of Research Collaborations in the University's Research Focus Areas

In order to maximise the potential of the University to build and support research excellence, particular attention is given to researchers working in the University's Research Focus Areas: Indigenous Research, Health, Ethics, Philosophy, Theology and Catholic Education. By concentrating effort and resources in these Focus Areas there will be greater capacity to build sustainable research teams and lines of research inquiry. Researchers across the University and in Schools are actively encouraged to build linkages with the University's Research Centres/Institutes and to recognise the benefits of collaborative approaches to research activity.

Strategies:

- Provide direct support for researchers working in collaboration with the University's Research Institutes/Centres and on the Research Focus Areas of the University.
- Pursue external research funding to support activity in the University's Research Focus Areas, particularly via partnerships with government, industry and, where appropriate, the business sector.
- Pursue domestic and international collaborations with direct linkages to the University Research Centres/Institutes.
- Continue the UPA program which supports HDR scholarships for study directly related to the Research Focus Areas.

Measures:

- Number of formal collaborative arrangements with the University's Research Institutes/Centres.
- Number of academic staff engagement in Institute/Centre-led research projects.
- Research outputs and grant income in the Research Focus Area disciplines.
- Number of HDR enrolments in disciplines supported by the University's Research Institutes/Centres.