

**International Centre for Public Service Management**

**Public Policy and Management**

**Research Group**



**Research Strategy 2015-2020**

**NOTTINGHAM**  
TRENT UNIVERSITY

## Contents

### 1. Introduction.

- 1.1 The Public Management and Governance Research Group is the research group within the International Centre for Public Service Management at Nottingham Business School. It is one of the smaller of the eight research centres within NBS. In 2014 it had 5 research active core members, which expanded to 9 during 2015, although it lost one of its longest serving and most experienced researchers when Professor Malcolm Prowle left the university in October 2015.
  - 1.2 The group's activity was restructured in 2013 to help facilitate the Business Schools submission for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework under the Business and Management Assessment Unit and to help contribute the Business Schools application for accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).
  - 1.3 Towards the end of 2014, the group fundamentally reviewed the long-term ambitions and objectives of the group, to start to prepare for the 2020 REF, to reflect contemporary issues in public management, and to embrace the NBS Research Strategy 2014-19.
  - 1.4 The 2015 review of the NBS research groups made no proposals for changes to the group other than to allow a change of name to better reflect the group ambitions and avoid confusion with other groups in the school.
  - 1.5 This plan reviews and updates the ambitions and objectives of the group. It reflects the new NTU Research Strategy and the new NBS Research Plan 2015-2020 and takes account of changes in personnel and in the resources and opportunities available to the group.
  - 1.6 The current purpose and objectives of the group were reviewed and set out in our Annual Report of January 2015.
- 1.7 The **purpose** of the Public Policy and Management Research Group is to:
- Provide a focus for the scholarly activities and a distinctive research identity for public management and governance research within Nottingham Business School.
  - Provide a catalyst for organisational, staff and curriculum development in public management.
  - Generate interest and financial support for research and other scholarly activity in public management.
  - Promote, disseminate and support the research of members, their collaborators and associates.
  - Facilitate the creation of public value and optimise the social impact and influence of the research and activities of its members.
  - Facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations, within Nottingham Business School, across Nottingham Trent University and in the wider academic community interested in the theory and practice of public management.

1.8. The **objectives** of the group acknowledge and embrace the five primary areas of future focus articulated in the NBS Research Strategy 2015-2020. They are:-

- To facilitate the creation of public value and optimise the social impact of our research on the teaching, theory and practice of public management inside and outside of NBS.
- To maintain the current applied and operational research focus without inhibiting new initiatives or missing significant opportunities.
- Implement a strategy for the development of research into public policy, administration and management.
- To make an appropriate contribution to meeting the ambitions of the NBS Research Plan and the NBS submission to the 2020 REF.
- To expand research capacity through grant-related activity, consultancy contracts and engagement with funding providers.
- To maintain and develop the external profile of the group and maintain inter-disciplinary and international collaborations with identified individuals and institutions.

## 2. The NTU Research Strategy and the NBS Research Plan.

The NTU Research Strategy ....

The NBS Research Plan 2015-2020 is explicitly built around ambitions for the 2020 REF although they do not cover the full range of scholastic or research endeavours extant within the school and individual research groups.

It states that during the period 2015-20 NBS intends to increase the schools 'research power' to a level that will result in a REF2020 submission of 45+ faculty (FTE) with an average GPA of 3.0+, resulting in 6 impact case studies. To achieve this, in appendix 1, it sets research targets for the school or faculty as a whole, which will be measured and benchmarked against competitor institutions.

For comparative purposes the 2014 REF submission had 23 (FTE) faculty entered with an average GPA of 2.5 which were supported by 3 impact case studies. The key metric targets contained in Appendix 1 of the NBS Research Plan are reproduced below. These represent extremely challenging and ambitious targets, although the NBS plan also contains areas for new investment already approved by the university.

Key Metrics	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Increase the number of research engaged faculty to 2/3 through IRR submissions	74 (85)*	89 (97*) <b>7</b>	100-120 <b>8</b>	125-30 <b>10</b>	125-30 <b>10</b>	125-130 <b>10</b>
Increase the number of 3/4 star (ABS) publications	47	45-50 <b>3-4</b>	50-55 <b>4-5</b>	55-60 <b>5</b>	60 <b>5</b>	60 <b>5</b>
Increase the total number of published articles in peer reviewed journals (ABS)	112	100-115 <b>8-9</b>	105-120 <b>9-10</b>	110-125 <b>9-10</b>	115-130 <b>9-10</b>	120-13 <b>10</b>
Increase number of	40	50 ( <b>4</b> )	55 ( <b>4</b> )	60 ( <b>5</b> )	65 ( <b>5</b> )	65 ( <b>5</b> )

research bids						
No. of successful bids	11	16 <b>(1)</b>	18 <b>(1)</b>	20 <b>(2)</b>	25 <b>(2)</b>	25 <b>(2)</b>
Increase research grant income to 200k (2014-15) and £500K (2018-19)	200K	500K <b>40k</b>	650K <b>52k</b>	750K <b>60k</b>	900K <b>72k</b>	1M <b>80k</b>
PGR Completions PhD/Prof Docs, f/t/ p/t. Home/International/DBA /PhD	16 8	27 <b>(2)</b> 9 <b>(1)</b>	30 <b>(2)</b> 10 <b>(1)</b>	30 <b>(2)</b> 12 <b>(1)</b>	35 <b>(3)</b> 15 <b>(1)</b>	35 <b>(3)</b> 15 <b>(1)</b>
Increase number of case studies to 50 per year (20% in case clearing house)	30	35 <b>3</b>	40 <b>3</b>	45 <b>4</b>	50 <b>4</b>	50 <b>4</b>
To publish textbooks/research monographs	7	10 <b>1</b>	16 <b>1</b>	18 <b>1</b>	20 <b>2</b>	20 <b>2</b>
Proportion (No.) of research active staff (REF standard)	26-30	35-45 <b>3</b>	40-45 <b>3</b>	45-50 <b>4</b>	45-55 <b>4</b>	45-55 <b>4</b>
Proportion (No.) of research active staff (developing)	54-70	70-85 <b>6-7</b>	85-90 <b>7</b>	85-90 <b>7</b>	80-85 <b>7</b>	75-85 <b>6-7</b>

Key metric targets to 2015-2020 (NBS Research Plan September 2015).

There are 97 faculty members with research allowances in NBS of which 8 are within the Public Management Research Group. The average research allowance for members of the group is below the average for faculty as a whole (reflecting the younger profile of new group members), and the group now contains only one Professor (Barton) with the maximum research allowance.

The plan provides for a significant increase in research grant income and states that in part this will be achieved through specific research targets (identified by asterisks in the above table) which will be given to individual research professors and their respective groups during the annual PDCR review in 2015.

If (for the sake of illustration only) the group becomes responsible for achieving 8% of the NBS research plans targets, this could give some indication of what the school might be expecting and the relevant figures have therefore been included in red in the table above.

It might also be anticipated that with an intention to submit 6 impact case studies to the REF that the group would be expected to contribute one of these cases and one potential study from the group is included in the NBS research Plan.

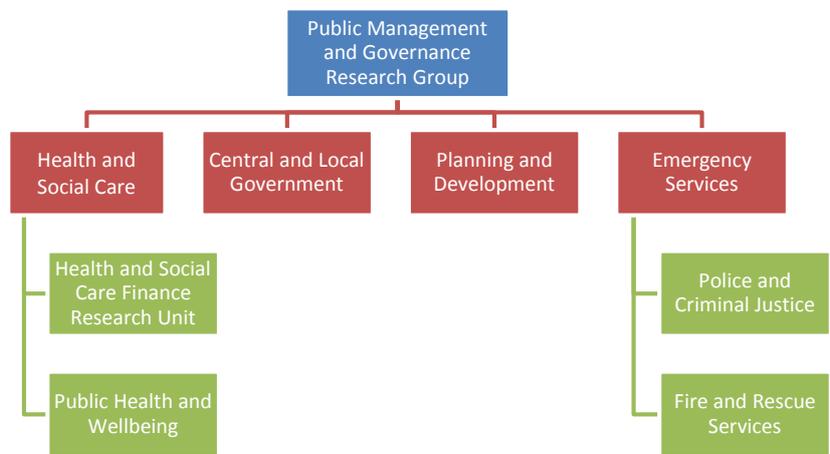
The actual targets for the group are likely to be subject to variations across the various groups and members of faculty. The targets will be subject to negotiation, and the NBS Research Plan currently includes no hypothecated or direct additional resources for the Public Management Group.

Colleagues are invited to comment on the scope nature and details of both the NBS Research Plan metrics and the indicative contribution of the Public Policy and Management Group.

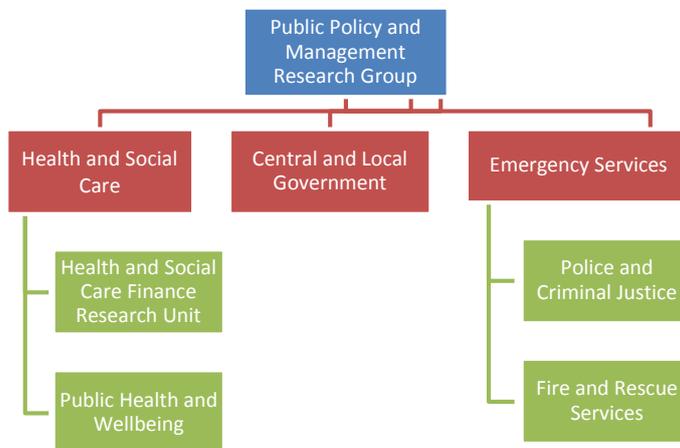
### 3. The Group Structure, sub-units and key areas and focus of the groups research

**Commented [HM1]:** This is useful but do these stay in the final version? 'Illustrative' may become official targets as the document gets more widely shared. We could say that pro rata we would be expecting to contribute about 8% of the NBS plans targets and leave out the numbers. Also with the smaller numbers we run into quantisation issues e.g. achieving 1 textbook per year; perhaps better to have a total metric by 2020, or as above not detail the numbers.

The Public Management and Governance research Group has been structured around 4 areas of interest, which are defined as ‘projects’ and/or units and these are detailed below. Each of the four ‘projects’ have their own webpages with links off the PMGRG ‘home’ page. Two of the projects have two complementary but subsidiary work streams and the current research activity of each of the four units is articulated on the groups’ dedicated pages on the NTU Research website with the home page being accessed via the following link [http://www.ntu.ac.uk/apps/research/groups/22/home.aspx/group/143523/overview/public\\_management\\_and\\_governance\\_research\\_group](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/apps/research/groups/22/home.aspx/group/143523/overview/public_management_and_governance_research_group)



Over the last year, three out of the 4 units (Health, Local Government and Emergency Services) have been particularly productive and their multiple outputs have been recorded on the NTU Institutional Repository (IREP) and brought together in the research groups Annual Report. Activity in the fourth area has been significantly less and any projects have mainly been done in conjunction with the Economic Strategy Research Bureau (ESRB) within NBS or with other related groups elsewhere in NTU with those groups taking the lead role. It is proposed to continue to contribute to such projects (one of which is ongoing) but formally manage and deliver the projects under the ESRB.



Do colleagues agree with the proposal to formally delete the planning and development unit from the groups' organisational structure.

Commented [HM2]: I'm ok with this.

#### 4. The Strategic Aims and Objectives for the Group.

The strategic intention for the group....

The proposed objectives for the Public Policy and Management Research Group, which have been re-ordered such that the most important objectives appear first are:-

- To facilitate the creation of public value and optimise the social impact of our research on the teaching, theory and practice of public management inside and outside of NBS.
- To maintain the current applied and operational research focus without inhibiting new initiatives or missing significant opportunities.
- To maintain and develop the external profile of the group and continue to develop interdisciplinary and international collaborations with identified individuals and institutions.
- To make an appropriate contribution to meeting the ambitions of the NBS Research Plan and the NBS submission to the 2020 REF as identified in the research outputs and targets outlined in this strategy and summarised in Appendix 1 (to be negotiated).
- To expand research capacity through grant-related activity, consultancy contracts and engagement with funding providers as identified in the research outputs and targets outlined in this strategy and summarised in Appendix 1.

Commented [HM3]: I have seen many international research groups based in the UK's more research-intensive universities enhance this by concerted efforts on social media platforms. I think this is a potentially important area that is missing from this strategy. It doesn't need great detail but I'm suggesting that some development on social media is a specific objective, may be in the medium term section below.

#### 5. The 2015/2016 Academic year

- a) Existing activity/interests to be maintained or developed

In the short term, and in the light of the resource envelope for 2015/16 arising out of the IRR process, the group are fully committed (if anything over-committed) in delivering the outputs and obligations of the following ongoing projects

The **Health and Social Care Unit** currently have four research consultancy projects on-going:

- A Hospital discharge evaluation project centred on Kings Mill Hospital in Mansfield;
- Pre-admission decisions in South Nottinghamshire centred around the Emergency Services and urgent care provision at the Queens Medical centre.
- developing and promoting a Value for Money culture in public services organisations, and
- the costs of ageing populations in the developed world.

The latter two projects are likely to transfer to the University of Gloucestershire with Professor Prowle in the near future. The former two projects may have some potential for development as an impact case study. At the time of writing the Hospital discharge evaluation has entered its second phase which is intended to produce a final report by April 2016 (although the commissioner are considering a third phase). The A&E project which should finish in January 2016 includes a requirement to submit a further NIHR grant application.

In addition Sarah Pass has a seed corn project on overcoming the organisational barriers to the integration of Health and Social Care Services.

The **Emergency Services Unit** has two research consultancies on Fire and Rescue Services ongoing together with an invitation to Murphy to contribute as independent expert to a NAO study. The first two projects are research consultancies which are continuations from previous work for the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and have to be undertaken in series rather than parallel. They are being undertaken with colleagues from Nottingham University who are the lead consultants with NTU being sub-consultants. The first project was due to be finished by the end of September is likely to be finished by the end of October with the second project to be finished by July 2016.

The NAO invitation is a personal invitation to Murphy, and follows from a recent report for the NAO undertaken with a colleague from Durham University. The NAO project is related to a National Report that is due to be completed within the current financial year. A previous Fire and Rescue project formed an impact case study for the 2014 REF and the current projects are included in the NBS Research Plan as a potential impact case study for the 2020 REF.

Barton and Mathews also have a seed corn project investigating Lean Implementation in Police Services: A Critical Review of High and Low Performing Forces.

The **Local and Central Government Unit** (Jones) have ongoing publication commitments arising out of an IRSPM Accounting and Finance SIG project on financial resilience for which they have recently submitted a phase 2 application to CIMA via Bocconi University (Steccolini) which is the lead institution on the project.

Murphy has on-going publication commitments arising out of a project with a colleague from Durham University (Ferry) for the NAO on the Accountability, Transparency and Public Assurance arrangements across locally delivered public services. Murphy also has a commitment to a cross national comparative study of strategic management project based around membership of the EGPA SIG on Strategic Government and Management.

The group have collectively submitted evidence in support of 3 potential REF2020 case studies (Health, Fire and Rescue Services and Local Services) based around the above projects. They would also wish to expand their growing interest in international comparative studies within the established BAM, EGPA, and IRSPM networks and interest groups. To facilitate this there are a number of grant applications in development.

All three units within the group have aspirations to contribute both individual submissions and potential case studies to REF2020. However, some core members of the group are approaching retirement age and the group would like clear assurances of support for the potential investment of time and effort in the proposed case studies (from NBS, and NTU). If the case studies are supported, the teams would require increased time and flexibility to prepare the publications necessary and to develop and implement appropriate impact strategies.

There are already short term capacity or resourcing issues being experienced and the group have identified assistance with drafting grant applications (and ethical approval applications – particularly in the NHS), sympathetic teaching timetabling and support and assistance with the proposed REF case study development and impact strategies as short term issues. A need for younger collaborators and some research assistantship are specifically identified needs – as well as developing and maintaining links to policy makers and ‘think tanks’.

An early indication about whether a SIF application is likely to be supported; and greater investment and editorial control of our web presence would be helpful.

#### **6. The medium term 2016/17 and 2017/18.**

As and when the NBS research plan is finalised and REF group targets negotiated, the group will review this plan but (at this stage), we envisage contributing to the individual researchers GPA score by targeting long term to submit 30% of research active members of the group although this is dependent on the GPA benchmark used. Because of the paucity of Public Management journals in the 3 and 4 \* categories, and the desire to develop less experienced colleagues the group would have preferred a lower benchmark such as the 2.5 used in the 2014 REF.

In terms of the development of impact case studies we consider this to be an area where the group could potentially make a disproportionate positive contribution and counterbalance our contributions in other areas. Although it would require the investment of additional resources the group could be supported to develop two impact case studies by developing and supplementing existing ongoing projects.

**Commented [HM4]:** This is a significant issue and highlights how unhelpful the ABS list is to applied research carried out by business schools.

The group would also like to contribute to the NBS research environment with at least one (external) research workshop or SIG meeting or conference held at NBS each year. This would be in addition to on-going active involvement in internal and external research seminars, conferences and networks – such as Alternative Futures and A&F seminar series internally and IRSPM, BAM, EURAM, EGPA externally.

In terms of income, the group has recently been able to source small grant funding, and relatively small research consultancy projects but large grants have proved elusive and the groups potential contribution to these targets needs to be realistic.

The groups contribution to intellectual and/or professional esteem is however disproportionately positive, even with the impending loss of Professor Prowle. All members of the group hold both professional and academic posts in CIPFA, BAM, PAC, CIMA, CfPS etc. plus editorial board positions on academic journals. All senior member mentor less experienced researchers both in the group and within NBS.

In terms of capacity in the medium-term the group need to attract new younger members (PhD, RAs Post Docs and new lecturers) as this is predicted to be a growing issue. The group would also wish to build capacity in terms of the impact strategy of (any) impact case study being developed and/or any successful SIF application.

#### **7. The longer term up to March 2020 and the REF2020**

Subject to sufficient support in the IRR, SIF and other investment initiatives between 2015 and 2020, all active core members of PMGRG would expect to be eligible for REF 2020 by the audit deadline, although this is clearly dependent on the GPA benchmark determined.

The group would like an early decision on potential Impact Case Studies, as this will clearly affect resource allocation and strategy implementation. However in addition to the two potential case studies from within existing projects (whether or not these are supported) the group consider that its members could potentially contribute to the preparation of other case studies in other parts of NTU such as Social Sciences, and Education in addition to the NBS case studies.

In terms of enriching the wider NBS Research Environment, in this later phase, the group would expect to intensify the number and involvement of faculty (and our key external collaborators) in the research environment initiatives referred to in section 6 of this plan. We would use the individual group members' positions on academic and professional bodies and networks (BAM, IRMPS, PAC, EGPA, CIPFA, JFMPS, etc.) as potential springboards or gateways to widen the opportunities to raise the NBS research profile and reputation of NBS

In addition to the capacity issues mentioned in section 6 above, in this later long-term phase the group are going to have to address the succession issues of the ageing core group of researchers, as well as any short term resourcing issues that emerge late in the REF 2020 process.

Historically public management research has made a strong contribution to the outputs and influence of NBS and NTU academically, professionally and in the community. More recently, however, in the last 10 years, its prominence, importance and influence has significantly declined within NBS and NTU. This is evidenced through significantly declining investment and reduced numbers of active researchers and research students in recent years.

Despite this decline public management research has consistently made a disproportionate positive contribution to NBS output (most recently in the 2014 REF and to the recent draft AASCB accreditation application) and to its influence and esteem in the community. Unless this decline in investment and support is reversed, public management research activity in NBS is likely to 'wither on the vine'.

The social purpose, objectives and obligations of NTU (and NBS) to contribute to this particular university objective (namely its social purpose), will clearly be undermined. This would be a wasted opportunity given the Vice Chancellors proposed new 'vision' for the university and the prominence that public management projects play in the NTU/NBS publicity.

#### **Appendices - 1. Specific Outputs and/or Targets**

To be inserted after the consultation on this draft of the strategy

Because of the emphasis and form of the NBS research plan we would envisage outputs and targets being defined for the short (2015/16) medium (following two years) and long term (up to the 2020 REF)

We also envisage targets being defined for the major REF categories (although these clearly may change as information on the REF 2020 is revealed)

For the 2014 REF this included:-

- Achievement of GPA average
- Impact Case Study Assessment
- The Research Environment at NBS