

Research Environment (REF5)

UoA3B: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy (Biomedical Sciences)

Introduction: The Biomedical Sciences Research Institute (BMSRI) is located in Coleraine and in Derry/Londonderry. It is composed of eight Research Groups, with staff mainly drawn from the School of Biomedical Sciences, but also some from the recently established School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences (9 FTE), and from the School of Psychology (3 FTE). In the current period we have delivered on our RAE commitments and continued our financially sustainable expansion for the benefit of the health of the general population, clinical treatment of patients, and economic development

What we do: We undertake research in biomedical science, nutrition and dietetics, optometry, and pharmaceutical science. Our strategy has been to concentrate on key degenerative diseases, including those with a nutritional aspect, that affect an increasingly ageing population. We have worked from the basic molecular level as far as to human clinical trials, with translation to clinical and commercial benefits. Our basic and applied research into disease development has led to improvements in disease prevention, diagnosis and therapy.

How have we done: Our approach to research over the last 20 years has been outstanding: we achieved the top 5* ratings in both the RAE1996 and RAE2001 and we were ranked in first place in terms of research power in RAE2008. Our staff have provided leadership and established influential networks regionally, nationally and internationally. The BMSRI has completed an average of 24 PhD awards per year (118 since 2008), including CAST awards with industry.

Financially Sustainable Expansion: At the Coleraine campus in 2008, we opened the 4,000m² SAAD Centre for Pharmacy & Diabetes (£1.84M from the SAAD Group, £3.2M from the SRIF3 programme and £1.3M from university funding) to accommodate the Centre for Metabolomics, the new Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences School, and a new suite of laboratories to accommodate the Diabetes Research Group. We also opened four new major clinical research centres: (1) In 2008, a £2M 1,000m² multi-use flexible facility for the Clinical Translational Research & Innovation Centre (C-TRIC; formerly ABC-RIF); a not-for-profit Company, wholly owned by the BMSRI, the Western Health & Social Care Trust and Derry City Council, located at Altnagelvin Hospital, Derry~Londonderry. (2) In June 2013, the £5.5M Invest NI-funded (Regional Development Agency) Functional Brain Mapping Facility, a multidisciplinary cross-faculty initiative led by the Intelligent Systems Research Centre (Faculty of Computing & Engineering), in partnership with the BMSRI, the Institute of Nursing and Health Research and C-TRIC. (3) In September 2013, the £4M Wellcome Trust-Wolfson Foundation Northern Ireland Clinical Research Facility (NICRF) in Belfast City Hospital, a partnership between University of Ulster, Queen's University of Belfast, the Health & Social Care R&D Office and Belfast Hospital Trust. (4) In October 2013, the £11.5M Northern Ireland Centre for Stratified Medicine based in C-TRIC, with funding for 22 new posts including 15 new lectureships and 5 Research Associates with agreement for clinical input from 10 Consultants based in the Western Health & Social Care Trust (funded by Invest NI/Public Health Agency R&D grant and the University). This last Centre will contribute to two of our planned strategic objectives: systems-biological studies and identification of biomarkers. It may eventually assist in one deferred proposal, the creation of a cross-border medical school.

Equipment across this building infrastructure has been consolidated as Core Facility Units, up to GLP standards. A Quality Assurance Officer manages the CFUs assisted by 22 technicians and a Clinical Trials Manager (who oversees clinical trials, ethics and governance). CFU resources are available to researchers and IUL promotes CFUs services to third parties in major industry and SMEs

Our Thriving Research Environment: Our success in maintaining a dynamic, internationally competitive, financially sustainable infrastructure has enabled the BMSRI to grow and thrive, reflected by a **23% increase in research staff numbers** (60.7 FTE submitted in RAE2008, 74.35 FTE in REF2014). We have delivered a sustained year-on-year increase in **research income**, which has **increased by >30%** (average annual spend £3.1M in RAE2008, £4.07M in REF2014).