Institution: Abertay University

Unit of Assessment: 21 Sociology

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

1.1 Unit context and structure

Abertay is a small, cohesive University that in recent years has developed a significant reputation, including being named the top modern university in Scotland (*Guardian Good University Guide 2019*; *Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide 2017*). The Sociology Unit has contributed significantly to these achievements.

UoA21 sits within the Division of Sociology, part of the School of Business, Law and Social Sciences (BLS), and was submitted for the first time to REF2014. As a relatively small Unit we laid the foundations to improve research, income, and impact. One indication of this is that the number of staff being submitted by the Unit has increased from 7 FTE for REF2014 to 10 FTE for REF2021.

The Unit operates within the context of **Abertay's RKE Strategy** (2014-19 & 2020-25), R-LINCS: Research-Led Innovation Nodes for Contemporary Society. RKE governance is managed by Abertay's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. The R-LINCS strategy is overseen by Abertay's Research Executive, led by the Dean of Research, and implemented by Theme Leaders. R-LINCS integrates our research into a single Abertay-wide initiative designed to capitalise on our cohesive, focused, and collaborative nature. R-LINCS bridges conventional boundaries between research disciplines to devise innovative interdisciplinary approaches that deliver research with impact.

R-LINCS 2014-19 had 4 cross-cutting themes: Environment, Security, Society and Creative Industries. R-LINCS provides:
-       A single, pan-University research leadership to drive our discipline strengths and interdisciplinary research agenda and foster external collaborations, including with external organisations (Sections 1, 3 and 4);
-       A cross-University Graduate School, which offers us a coherent, Abertay-wide integrated training programme for staff and PGR students (Section 2);
-       Intra- and inter-theme support for RKE (including funded doctoral studentships) (Section 1, 3);
-       Facilitation of public engagement (Section 4).

UoA21 **research integrity** and progress towards an **open research** environment wholly aligns with the institution. Abertay fully engages with (and is a signatory to CSCDR and KEC):
-       the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (CSRI)
-       the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (CSCDR)
-       the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC)
-       the Concordat on Open Research Data (CORD)
-       the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research (CEPR), which we use to guide development of supportive RKE policies, practices, and structures (see Section 2).

We are compliant with our CSRI commitments: all staff and students are required to adhere to the highest standards of **integrity** in the conduct of their research as set out in the Abertay Research Code of Conduct (ARCoC) and engage in mandatory research integrity training (including GDPR for Researchers).

The University has taken important strides to develop an **open research** environment. Published outputs are, wherever possible, open-access compliant. We are working towards open access compliance with our research data by 12/2021. Our Open Access and Research Data Management Policies, researcher development training and individual support is provided by our dedicated Research Support Manager, increasing staff engagement with open research,

pre-registration, and open-access data repositories. We are committed to the responsible use of metrics in research evaluation and are a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). Our policy and practice on research metrics for research assessment is included within our ARCoC and informs our Recruitment and Promotions policies and procedures, and our REF Code of Practice.

1.2 Research and impact strategy
Our overall Unit strategy is to deliver research with impact, combining academic excellence with stakeholder collaboration. University investment in the Unit has enabled us to attract and support research active staff and to take a strategic approach to building research capacity and a vibrant research culture, as we outlined in 2014 (section 2). Since then, the Sociology Unit has been on a trajectory of fostering researcher development as evident in our focus on improving the quality of research outputs and impact and increasing research income.

A well-defined **income generation strategy** took advantage of the R-LINCS interdisciplinary approach to research, in particular focusing on the digital society and on societal issues associated with novel digital technologies and helped foment close collaboration with Abertay colleagues in other Units (in particular UoA12 and UoA32). As a result, research income has increased eightfold across the assessment period (section 3). Such progress has allowed us both to meet the strategic objectives set out in the last assessment period and to articulate achievable, sustainable future goals for research and impact.

Our 2014 **strategic objectives** were to:

1. produce national and internationally recognised research which prioritises external impact
2. contribute productively to the work of R-LINCS research themes (Society; Security; Environment; Creative Industries)
3. increase annual research income through individual and collaborative funding applications

The achievement of **objective one** is reflected in the **improved quality of research outputs** across a wider range of staff being submitted by the Unit. We have strengthened our research profile nationally and internationally, particularly in areas of sociological theory, digital sociology, and criminal justice policy. Sociological research at Abertay clusters into **three research areas: Applied Social Theory** (Law, Marron, Memos, McNeish, Moir, Waiton); **Crime & Society** (Martin, Graham, Rogers, Waiton, De Paoli); and **Sociology of Information and Communication Technologies** (De Paoli, Moir); with points of overlap in substantive fields like cybersecurity, environment, and socio-political and policy change in Scotland.

Objective one was achieved by prioritising quality outputs and external impact in a targeted way through the use of personal appraisals, workload planning, resource allocation, appointments, and accessing institutional support. We appointed staff working on 'real world' projects (e.g., Graham and Martin on policing; Rogers on gender-based violence) and set personal research impact objectives in appraisals to ensure that sufficient research time and resource was allocated to enable activity relevant to research quality outputs and external impact.

Making research conducive to **impact** is facilitated by our Research, Enterprise and Innovation Service (REIS) and the Graduate School. Individual researchers are supported to identify relevant funding schemes, prepare project proposals and organise advanced training in communications, dissemination and impact. For example, research staff participated in Impact training workshops led by 'Fast Track Impact' consultant Professor Mark Reed in 2016 and 2017. The Graduate School provide training on effective engagement with non-academic audiences as well as disseminating research through the media (including social media). This is buttressed by External and Corporate Relations support for press releases and organisation and marketing of conferences hosted by the Unit at Abertay, such as the BSA Early Career Forum Regional Event in 2019 and the Borders, Racisms and Resistance conference in 2017.

Both of our REF2021 **Impact Case Studies** emerged directly from our strategy of fostering research with wider application. The realisation of impact depends on institutional support for building and replenishing relationships with a focussed range of stakeholders. Graham (ICS-1) was appointed as part of this strategy to work on the relation between policing and society, bringing with him a wealth of expertise and access from his previous role as a senior police officer. From a more established academic vantage point, Waiton (ICS-2) worked with a range of stakeholders to generate impact from his more theoretically inclined work on the decline of liberal subjectivity, leading to the repeal of national legislation in Scotland.

Our impact is far more wide-ranging that demonstrated in the Impact Case Studies alone (section 4). Our strategy for impact focusses on supporting the effective dissemination, knowledge exchange and creation of partnerships, in particular in the areas of applied research on Information and Communication Technologies (De Paoli), policing, criminal justice systems and public policy (Graham, Martin, Rogers, Waiton), and environment (Rogers, McNeish). Impacts in these areas have been realised through the repeal of legislation, changes in policing practices and organisational cultures, the role of Information and Communication Technologies in local communities, and community control of water resources in Africa.

The achievement of **objective two** is reflected in the contribution of UoA21 to **R-LINCS** and **research leadership**. UoA21 staff achieved objective 2 by making significant contributions to the R-LINCS 'Society' and 'Security' research themes, including the provision of two University level Theme Leaders during the assessment period. While our work is grounded in Sociology it is shaped by the prominence given to collaborative and interdisciplinary research in the Abertay RKE strategy. Examples include, working across the university with colleagues with expertise in digital technologies (cybersecurity and computer games), with psychologists working on human interaction with self-service machines, and with civil engineers working on water management in Africa.

Sustainable interdisciplinary research is fostered by strategic University investment in postgraduate studentships as well as from external funding for studentships that enable us to bring together supervisory teams contributing different specialisms. Building research capacity benefitted from the R-LINCS award of 4 fully funded PhD studentships to UoA21 during the assessment period, while the 'Futures Scholarship' scheme has provided a further 2 postgraduate fee waivers. In such ways, Abertay materially supports the development of the postgraduate student base, supervisory training, and the research output and impact of staff.
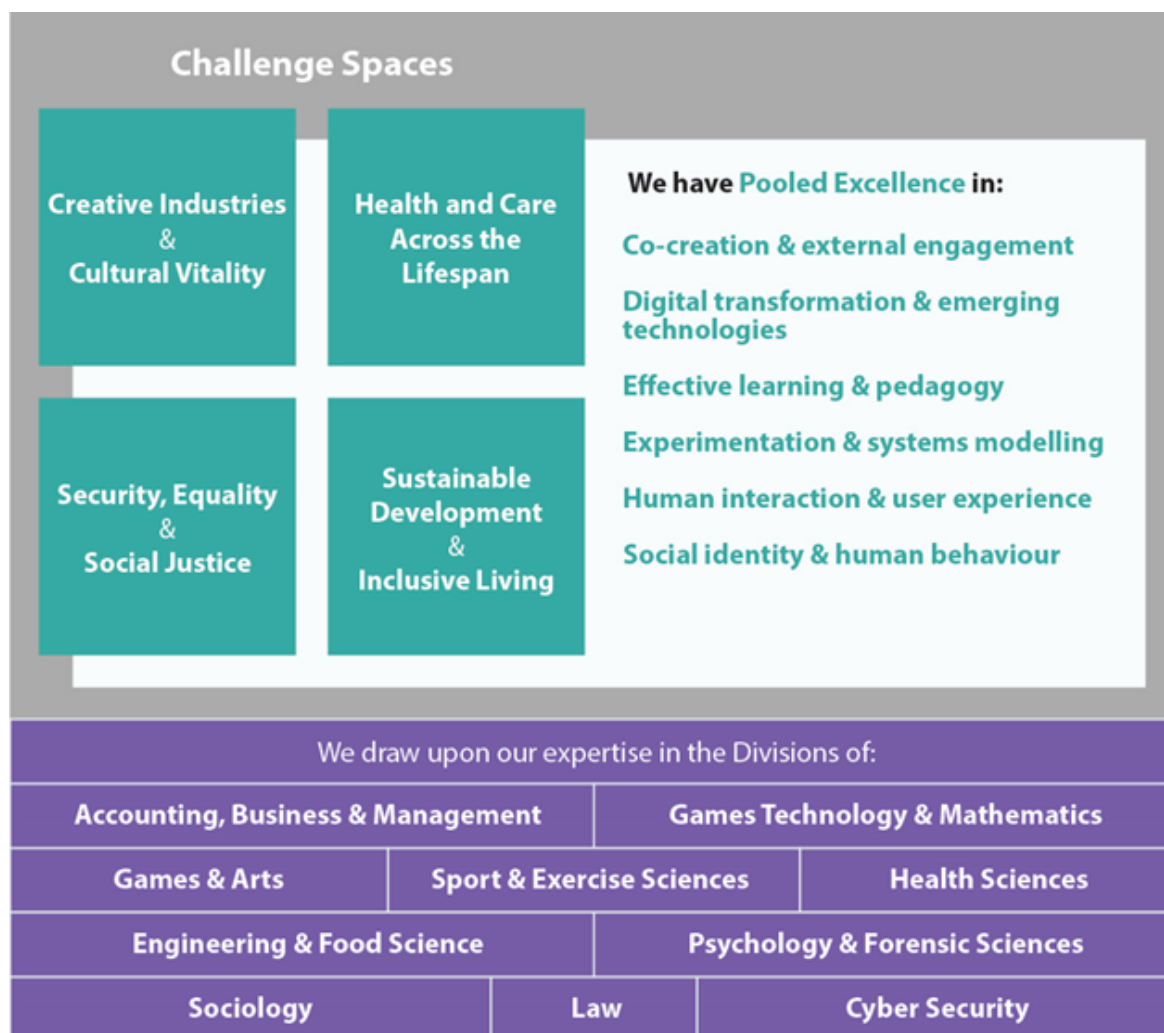
The achievement of **objective three** is reflected in a significant **increase in research income** to conduct interdisciplinary research. This objective was achieved by the active establishment and maintenance of strong **national and international research collaborations**, in particular partnering institutions and organisations (such as SMEs) working in the areas of computer science (broadly defined), design and other social sciences.

Objective 3 was achieved by continuous participation in research funding events, both nationally and at European level, in order to explore opportunities and build collaborations. In support of this goal, we drew upon the opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations opened up by R-LINCS and the allocation of time and resource for international networking and grant writing by the Division and the School. Our strategy led to a sharp increase in our annual research income through individual and collaborative funding applications (section 3). Most of these funding streams are associated with international collaborations created and maintained during the assessment period.

1.3 Future plans
At an institutional level the next five years of Unit-level research will be guided by the University's updated **RKE strategy**: R-LINCS 2020-25 re-envisages our 2014-19 research themes in terms of a number of '**Challenge Spaces**' that shape the contemporary world (Figure 1). In a new development we are building research leadership in '**Pooled Excellence**', i.e.,

distinct approaches and ways of working that cross-cut Challenge Space areas and the disciplinary strengths of academic Divisions.

Challenge Spaces

Creative Industries & Cultural Vitality

Health and Care Across the Lifespan

Security, Equality & Social Justice

Sustainable Development & Inclusive Living

We have Pooled Excellence in:

Co-creation & external engagement

Digital transformation & emerging technologies

Effective learning & pedagogy

Experimentation & systems modelling

Human interaction & user experience

Social identity & human behaviour

We draw upon our expertise in the Divisions of:

Accounting, Business & Management		Games Technology & Mathematics	
Games & Arts	Sport & Exercise Sciences		Health Sciences
Engineering & Food Science		Psychology & Forensic Sciences	
Sociology		Law	Cyber Security

The **strategic objectives** for the Unit over the next five years are as follows:

1. Increase the number of research **outputs** across the Unit recognised as internationally excellent contributions to the discipline
2. Increase our research **income** to sustain and enhance our research capabilities
3. Exert an **impact** beyond academia which yields economic, social, and cultural benefits by developing partnerships with a wider set of societal actors

We will achieve our **first objective** by enacting processes of mentoring and support for writing high-quality published outputs, particularly for early career colleagues, in line with the BLS School target that 75 percent of staff will be producing 3* outputs by the time of the next REF. A group was formed at the end of 2020 within BLS, led by Professor Law, tasked with supporting colleagues to develop a consistent thematic focus to raise the quality and reputation of their outputs over time. A key role in this process is the annual Development Discussions that staff have with their line manager to support the research aspirations and developmental needs of individuals. Staff are also guided to seek out external sources of support provided by inter-University Scottish Research Pools, the Scottish Graduate Schools, Scottish Institute of Policing Research (SIPR) and internal R-LINCS opportunities for research collaboration and the research training offered by the Graduate School (section 2). This helps ensure that a body of high-quality outputs underpins our research profile and makes a major contribution to the discipline.

We will achieve our **second objective** by leveraging the track-record and networks that were built during the current assessment period and by extending the range of organisations that we

collaborate with. We have plans to establish a **research lab** which will enhance our research capacity to submit successful applications for competitive funding (section 3). In line with Abertay's RKE strategy and BLS's operational plan to increase income generation, we will seek to support and increase the number of people and applications being submitted for competitive funding and thus make our approach to research funding sustainable over the longer term. This will be achieved by targeted mentoring at the earliest stage in the development of funding proposals before they are submitted to the formal internal peer review process. A group was formed at the end of 2020 within BLS, led by Professor De Paoli, tasked with supporting early career colleagues with their proposal writing and submission in tandem with the dedicated support provided by the Graduate School

We will achieve our **third objective** by more concertedly seeking partners to secure applied outcomes for our research. To this end, a group was formed at the end of 2020 within BLS, led by Professor Martin, tasked with developing collaborative partnerships, which can lead to research applications and increased impact. Working towards the external impact of research will form a vital element of personal research plans and form part of the Development Discussion with the line manager. Here again, staff will be guided to pursue external or R-LINCS funding opportunities for research collaboration with industry and other external partners and will benefit from Graduate School training on impactful research. As with the thematic priorities of R-LINCS 2014-2019, we actively collaborate in the cross-disciplinary Challenge Space priorities 'Security, Equality & Social Justice' and 'Creative Industries & Cultural Vitality' that are at the heart of R-LINCS 2020-2025 and contribute knowledge, skills and expertise to the cross-cutting research collaborations grouped across the University as 'Pooled Excellence', particularly in areas of 'Co-creation & external engagement', 'Digital transformation & emerging technologies', 'Effective learning & pedagogy', Human interaction & user experience' and the 'Social identity & human behaviour' pool.

2. People

Abertay's overall strategy of building a vibrant, resilient, and sustainable research community has been a central feature of our Unit. The increase in research capacity has arisen from a strategic and sustained approach to staff recruitment and staff development. The numbers of both Category A submitted staff and postgraduate students have increased since the last REF.

2.1 Staff
At the census date, the Division of Sociology had 14 academic staff including 2 Professors, 5 Senior Lecturers and 7 Lecturers. Of these, 10 were Category A eligible staff and 4 were in teaching-focused positions. All Category A eligible staff are on permanent contracts and engage in teaching, administrative duties, and academic citizenship roles. There have been some academic staff changes since REF2014. Two Lecturers and a Senior Teaching Fellow left in the period. Three replacement Lecturers and a Professor of Criminology have been appointed. Three research-only staff have been employed on fixed term research contracts, of these two subsequently left the university at the end of the funding period and one was re-employed by the university on a new fixed term research contract.

Investment in new academic staff augmented existing and emerging research strengths, especially in the strategically important area of the sociology of crime and deviance (Graham, Martin, Rogers). All lecturing appointments during this REF period have been of research active staff with the aim of: i) complementing the Unit's research agenda; ii) supporting the delivery of relevant research-informed teaching; and III) enhancing our research capacity. For example, the appointment of a Professor of Criminology in 2019 was specifically designed to strengthen our research capacity in this area and, in conjunction with the Professor of Sociology, to support the research development of all staff. Abertay's commitment to investing in staff is further demonstrated by awards from Healthy Working Lives (Gold Award) and the Living Wage Foundation. Abertay held a promotion round in 2020 despite the COVID pandemic, resulting in the promotion of 4 members of staff from the Unit, two to Professor, one to Senior Lecturer and

one from Teaching Fellow to Lecturer. By recognising and rewarding research contributions Abertay is continuing to accelerate its plan to invest in and retain research active staff.

Two **early career staff** were appointed during the REF period. Early career staff are allocated a lower teaching and administrative workload to provide space not only to prepare their teaching materials and undertake certified training for teaching but also to ensure that they have dedicated research time to develop their research aspirations.

New staff benefit from a comprehensive Induction Programme covering PGR degrees and regulations, Abertay's RKE Strategy, ARCoC, CSRI, CORD and CSCDR. Depending on experience and as part of their probation, where required new staff without a teaching qualification undertake our PgCert Academic Practice (PgCAP) which includes a taught module on research covering regulations and policies underpinning research practice, building RKE networks, research planning and funding.

Consistent with the CSCDR, all staff have personal **Development Discussions** with their Line Managers twice a year. Development Discussions appraise both short-term research objectives and longer-term plans, training and development needs, and well-being or workload concerns. Development Discussions inform the workload allocation process and determines the percentage of an individual staff member's time dedicated to research and/or scholarship activity. This ensures a managed, fair, and transparent allocation of workload in a manner that facilitates and maximises research activity. In redesigning the curriculum, wherever feasible Category A staff teaching was organised into heavy and light teaching semesters to make concentrated blocks of time available for research and scholarship activity.

Training and development needs are met through the Graduate School and in consultation with line managers. The Graduate School has three Researcher Development Staff who, together with senior Abertay staff, provide >100 development opportunities annually for our PGRS and research community. Training includes advanced statistics and research methods, GDPR, impact, enterprise, PGRS supervision, public engagement, media training, paper and grant writing. Staff training and development needs that cannot be met internally are provided by external providers, (e.g., Fast Track Impact). Staff regularly discuss their research proposals, outputs, and plans for impact with more experienced senior colleagues and submit their work and funding applications for internal peer review. Staff also discuss their work in progress at School research seminars, participate in scholarly conferences, and contribute to external research networks (see section 4).

The university's **Sabbatical Policy** provides staff with the opportunity to apply for periods of remission from teaching and administration to pursue specific research objectives. During the current REF cycle, two Sociology staff were awarded six-month research sabbaticals to reinvigorate their research careers after undertaking significant administrative roles for the university.

In the face of the risk to research sustainability posed by **COVID** restrictions staff have been supported by the University to maintain their research activity by offering unlimited carers leave for staff with caring responsibilities and changes to working patterns to enable staff to work as flexibly as possible. A range of mitigation measures to support research were also introduced, such as the employment of Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants to support academics, and to support desk-based research where appropriate. For example, UoA21 staff were able to access Scottish Funding Council mitigation funds to employ a part-time Research Assistant to support a study of organisational learning within the British Transport Police during the Covid-19 crisis.

The primary use of the Division of Sociology cash **budget** over the REF period has been to support research, development and KE activities. The largest expenditure is associated with support for conference attendance to ensure that staff communicate their work to and network with national and international scholars. This is followed by staff development and training, for

example, three staff attended quantitative methods training courses provided by the Social Research Association in 2015 and 2017. Contributions are also made to the costs of attending seminars, public talks, and research training events, which have been prioritised to support staff research development. While conference and training form the bulk of the expenditure, other financial support has also been allocated to aid research and publication activities such as covering the costs of interview transcriptions, open access journal publication, hospitality for invited speakers and manuscript proof reading. During the REF period, the Graduate School and the Division of Sociology funded travel to relevant research events to support the subsequent submission of competitive grants, such as participation to H2020 ICT Proposers' Day events. The Unit also secured external support of £2565 from SICSA (Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance) to attend three such events.

Abertay provides **internal mentoring** through the PgCAP and we participate as partners in a **cross-institutional mentoring scheme**, Teaching, Research & Academic Mentoring (TRAM) with the Universities of Dundee and St Andrews, Glasgow School of Art, James Hutton Institute and Trinity College, Dublin. Academic staff are matched annually with mentors/mentees at external institutions to share knowledge and expertise, increase cross-institutional networking and mentoring, and support mentees with career development. UoA21 benefitted from and contributed to TRAM as cross-institutional mentors for three external staff and one internal staff as a mentee.

2.2 Research students
We set a goal in our REF2014 submission to expand the number of registered postgraduate research students (PGRS) from 4 to 12 by 2018. During the REF2021 period the Unit consistently **registered** more than that number, averaging around 15 PGRS registrations for Masters by Research (MbR), MPhil and PhD each year (see Table 1; n.b., fractional numbers reflect shared supervision across UoAs). Over the review period 11.5 PGRS (6 PhDs, 1 MPhil and 4.5 MbR) were supervised to **completion** by UoA21 staff (see Table 2). From this baseline of completed postgraduate degrees, the BLS operational plan aims to increase the number of PGRS that we supervise to completion by 10% by 2025.

Table 1: PGRS registrations 2014-2020

UOA 21	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
MbR	1	4	4	6	3.5	0	4
MPhil	0	0	3	2	1	2.5	2
PhD	10.5	10	10.5	13	10	11	12.5
Total	11.5	14	17.5	21	14.5	13.5	18.5

Table 2: PGRS completions 2014-2020

UOA 21	Total	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
MbR	4.5	0	0	0	3.0	1.5	0	0
MPhil	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
PhD	6	0	1.00	0	0	1.50	0	3.5
Total	11.5							

All PGRS are based in Abertay's **Graduate School**, allowing access to training and a large peer group from other disciplines. As well as providing physical resources (allocated desk in an open-plan office, social area, IT equipment), the Graduate School creates a structured system to support PGRS progress:
- **Progress panels**: students complete an annual progress report and presentation to a Review Panel to assure student progress, supervision quality and opportunity to address any issues.
- **Personal development planning**: Students track meetings, achievements, goals, and training needs into a Vitae Researcher Development Framework system, which must be submitted for approval one month before the PhD thesis. This ensures that students are

- systematically focused on progress, and that they are able to articulate the research, experience and wider achievements attained throughout their PG training.
- **Annual Graduate School conference**: All PGRS are required to present their research to peers, supervisors, and academic staff from across Abertay. This helps the students to develop presentation skills and confidence in a formal professional context.
- **Training**: Weekly skills-based seminars are held during term-time to meet individual training needs, including research methods, statistics (SPSS and R), qualitative analysis, public engagement and outreach training, academic writing, funding applications and business development.
- **Access to Researcher Development Staff**: providing tailored statistical support, and academic advice and peer-review (e.g., on funding applications).
- **Funding opportunities**: students can apply to dedicated funds for conference attendance and researcher training support (e.g., The Chancellor's Fund).

Given our small size, the University makes effective use of regional and national development and networking opportunities. We encourage our PGRS to work and exchange ideas with people, organisations, and colleagues in the wider research environment. Examples include, courses provided by other Universities, VITAE and Advance HE, and through our membership of the inter-University Scottish Research Pools (e.g., SIPR). Additionally, the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) provides all our PGRS with access to further support (e.g., advanced and specialist statistical training), methods workshops and personal development opportunities (e.g., internships). SGSSS is a Doctoral Training Partnership commissioned by ESRC and the Scottish Funding Council that provides all social sciences PGRS in the member universities, including Abertay, with high quality training experiences and resources.

By bringing together discipline-specific research under the remit of themed, competitive internal funding schemes, the Graduate School has supported the growth of the postgraduate student base, the cross-fertilization of ideas and expertise, enhanced the supervisory contribution and research output of staff, with an increased accent on high-quality publication of PGRS research. Additional schemes like the Abertay Futures Scholarship, funded at a School-level, enabled tuition fees to be waived for postgraduate students engaged in UoA21 research priority areas such as Covid-19 and the sociology of knowledge, while others have been supported through the University's R-LINCS studentships and co-funded studentships. Such financial assistance has particular value for our own first-class undergraduates aiming to undertake postgraduate studies at Abertay and expand their career aspirations.

Placement opportunities in industry, charities and government are also made available. For example, one of our Sociology PGRS undertook a SGSSS internship with the Scottish Government, supported financially by the University's Chancellor's Fund. PGR students with aspirations to become academics are able to study the module CAP501: Developing Academic Practice, accredited by Advance HE, which qualifies them to deliver small group teaching and makes them eligible for Associate Fellowship of Advance HE (AFHEA).

Less experienced and new postgraduate supervision staff are required to complete an online Epigeum course on Supervising Doctoral Studies and undertake in-house training before being mentored through their first PGRS supervision experience. Those new to Research Degrees examination must engage with our Novice Internal Examiners Process which involves in-house training and observation of viva voce.

The Unit contributes to the research training of PGRS through in-house and interdisciplinary collaborations. Examples of our engagement with formal PGRS training include two courses for the Graduate School, one on *Qualitative Data Collection* and another on *Qualitative Data Analysis*, and a session on *Identifying Your Research Niche and Managing your Potential*. Staff also support PGRS registered at other universities. For example, Law contributed a sociological perspective for the 'Theories of Knowledge' national postgraduate course provided by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities.

2.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
Our **University Strategic Plans** affirm Abertay's core purpose to develop and sustain an inclusive and supportive culture, one that recognises and values colleagues and students with different backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes and where they feel able to achieve their full potential by contributing fresh ideas and perspectives that have a positive impact on the world.

Our **Equality & Diversity Policy** ensures that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect and that an environment exists where discrimination is not tolerated. Abertay's ethos embeds inclusion, diversity, and equality in all our policies, operations, and strategic thinking. Consistent with CSCDR commitments, all staff in the Unit have undergone mandatory Diversity in the Workplace and Unconscious Bias training, and Recruitment and Selection training is required for all involved in recruitment and promotion decisions. We have published an EDI Action Plan that maintains the process of Equality Impact Assessment for policy, statements and procedures and makes accessible relevant software systems and supporting information.

Our Inclusion, Diversity and Equality at Abertay (IDEA) Management Group monitors progress and implementation of EDI through annual reporting. Our governing body, Court, through its People, Health & Equality Committee, has oversight of EDI and receives regular reports including our Mainstreaming Reports. The University consults the Trade Unions on EDI through regular Joint Liaison Committees and works with Abertay Students Association on student EDI matters. UoA21 staff serve as representatives on the University and College Union and Staff Engagement Advisory Team committees which have, for example, worked with management to support staff with caring or health responsibilities during COVID restrictions.

Since REF2014, the University has been awarded the **Athena SWAN** Bronze award (2015 and 2018). Led by the Dean of Research and Graduate School, the self-assessment team has helped drive the development of fair and equitable policies and practices to support researchers, staff, and students across the University. Abertay was one of the first universities to sign up to the pilot scheme for the **Race Equality Charter** in 2014. In 2016 we became – and remain at time of writing – the first and only higher education institution in Scotland to hold the Race Equality Charter Mark bronze. UoA21 is involved in the preparation of School-based Athena Swan Bronze submission for 2022/23.

Our **Academic Recruitment and Promotion Policies** are applied to ensure a fair, equitable, transparent and consistent process for appointing and reviewing the grade of academic staff, which is integrated with the University's Role Profiles and underpinned by the principle of 'equal pay for work of equal value'. As a signatory of **DORA**, when considering appointments and promotions, we evaluate research on its own merit rather than on the journal Impact Factor.

The University's suite of **Work-Life Balance Policies** (Flexible Working; Maternity Leave; Parental Leave; Shared Paternal Leave; Adoption Leave) are designed to support staff and aim to establish a 'best practice' culture. The University is responsible for supporting any periods of maternity leave whether or not there is additional funding provided by the research funders.

UoA21 staff are active **Equality & Diversity researchers** in areas such as gender-based violence, social inequalities, racism, sectarianism, and social justice. We also act as citizen sociologists beyond the University, for example, Martin is a member of the Cross-Justice working group on Race and Workforce for the Scottish Government Justice Board.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

3.1 Research funding strategy
The funding strategy of the Unit has been one of investing time and resources to establish secure and steady streams of research income in order to increase the research capacity and the national and international profile of the Unit. As indicated above, compared to the previous REF2014 submission, the Unit has achieved an eight-fold increase in research income over the REF2021 period, while income per head increased five-fold. Despite its relatively small size, the Unit has been successful in leading and securing funding from a variety of sources, related to

both research excellence and innovation (Figure 2). With 72% of funding coming from EU sources, 12% respectively from UK Based Charities and UK sources and 3% from BEIS Research Councils et al.

Figure 2: Unit Research Income, 2014-2020
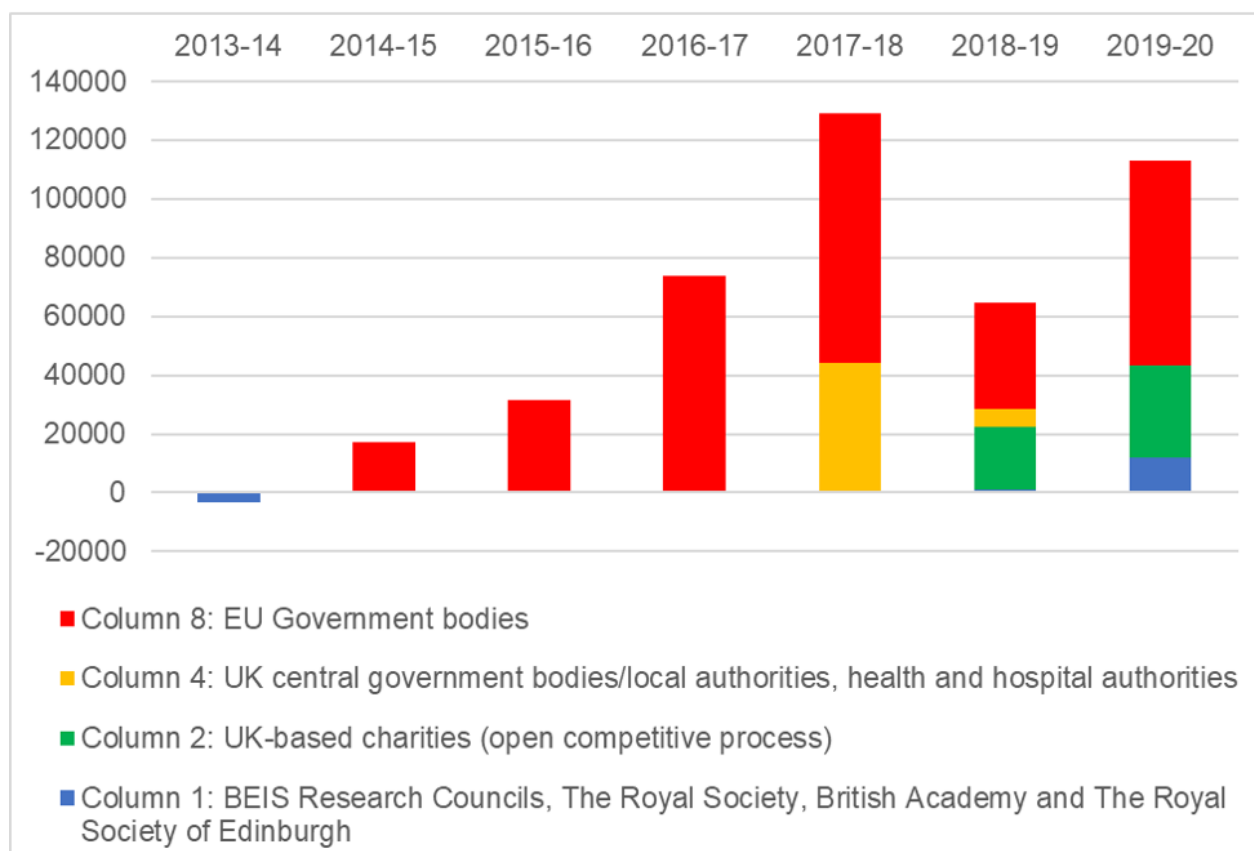
During the current REF period our first strategic action was to explore and secure grants from the European Commission (in particular focussing on the Horizon 2020 programme). Taking this route enabled the Unit to play to its strengths (interdisciplinary capacity and ability to produce applied social research, especially in relation to Information and Communication Technologies) while being part of wider international consortia, thus increasing the level of international collaboration and the international profile of the Unit. Additionally, due to the small scale of the University, the Unit has invested time and effort working on cross- and inter-disciplinary bids with colleagues working in other Units (in particular UoA12 and UoA32) within Abertay.

The Unit secured funding from the European Commission (often in conjunction with colleagues from other Units within the University) for the following projects: Wikirate (£38,677, Framework Programme 7, on the subject of Digital Social Innovation); STEP (£177,650, H2020 on the subject of e-participation for young people); PIE News (£138,184.00, H2020 on the subject of Digital Social Innovation); Foresight (£39,773.00, in collaboration with Abertay's Division of Cybersecurity, H2020, on the subject of cybersecurity training); and TRIPLE (£352,725 circa, H2020, on the subject of research infrastructures for social sciences and humanities). All these projects answer to societal challenges in relation to the development of novel Information Technologies, and include research in areas such as trust, end-user in security, poverty and emancipation. In three of these European projects, the Unit has acted as Work Package leader, demonstrating leadership capacity within the projects and an ability to coordinate the work of our international partners.

Additional sources of funding secured by the Unit include ICT-related funding from a Dundee-based charitable trust for the project Mapping Social Innovation (£215,000, led by Sociology in conjunction with the colleagues from Games and Art at Abertay). The Unit also secured

Research Council Income (£24,893 in an EPSRC-funded project led by Stirling University), for the co-design of a prototype platform for managing environmental/recycling data. This was followed by UKRI GCRF funding, to collaborate on a project developing innovative food supplement for infants in Zimbabwe (collaboration led by Abertay colleagues in Food Science for the total amount of £410,627) to study cultural and social aspects that underpin this development and uptake. Income deriving from crime and society studies include SIPR (£49,981, in conjunction with the Division of Cybersecurity at Abertay, for studying the police cybercrime response from an international perspective), the police service in Aberdeen (£4000) for the scientific evaluation of a police operation, and the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (£15,000). Some of the projects mentioned above (such as TRIPLE) are still ongoing and will cross over in the next REF period with some income shared with other Units across the University.

3.2 Infrastructure and facilities
Abertay University has made significant investments in the **Graduate School** in our approach to research governance and leadership and in **REIS** (9.6FTE, total investment £2.8M during the period). Graduate School resources (e.g., Researcher Development staff, training seminars, peer-review college) are available to all staff and are called upon regularly to improve the quality of grant submissions. REIS offer advice and support on research related matters, including IP, contract management, costing, reviewing and approving applications for external funding, processing and managing grants awarded.

The **internal peer review** process has improved grant success rates and scale across Abertay (e.g., in 2020 30% success rate (average award £335K) with peer review *vs* 10% success rate (average award £53K) without). Additionally, R-LINCS Theme Leaders coordinate and support the development of collaborative ventures including stakeholder partnerships and cross-disciplinary research and RKE projects.

University-wide points of contact provide excellent **pooled expertise** to support staff research. Through the R-LINCS scheme, staff can access starter funding for projects that, if successful, would merit subsequent submission to competitive funding, pump-priming for new and existing researchers, and funding open access costs.

The university offers a lean **IT infrastructure** for research and data management and collaboration, including PURE, a digital repository for publications and a dedicated group within the internal Social Network Yammer ARC. Dedicated library staff provide further support for academic research by managing open access for publications and data.

3.3 Future plans
The Unit will **continue** to target European funding as it becomes available from the next Horizon programme, leveraging the network of international collaborations that has been built over the past seven years.

The Unit's plan for increasing and diversifying research income builds on our particular strengths to secure grants, first, in the emerging area of **crime and society** by fostering and strengthening existing relationships with police forces across the UK and, second, in the social aspects of **Information and Communication Technologies** by continuing to target European funding by building new partnerships and collaborations on the continent and to take a concerted approach to making submissions for UKRI funding. **Applied social theory** is engaged with interdisciplinary collaborative research networks to submit funding proposals to charities and UKRI inter alia for substantive studies of cultural democracy and authoritarianism, and visual ethnographies of refugee acculturation processes.

Moreover, the Unit aims to **diversify** the scope of its grant-making activities in order to respond effectively to potential future uncertainties whilst attempting to increase the current level of income. We will target more proactively UKRI income and explore more broadly the opportunities offered by UK Charities by building on new internal and external collaborations and

by being responsive to calls made by funders such as the National Institute for Health Research and the comprehensive alerts for funding calls compiled by Abertay's quarterly Research Funding Newsletter. The continuous collaboration with Abertay colleagues working in other Units (in particular, UoA12, UoA32 and UoA6) will remain important for the Unit as we bid for interdisciplinary forms of priority funding, focusing on excellent research with impact.

To facilitate and increase the capacity of the Unit to diversify future sources of grant income, we have identified an infrastructural need for the establishment of a dedicated **research lab** to deepen our methodological expertise in the sociology of digital transformation. The Unit is actively working to establish the lab. The research lab will provide expert research capabilities for the Unit to produce distinctive high-quality research, develop collaboration with local private and public actors and thus increase capacity for bidding to national funding streams, in particular UKRI funding. The lab will also facilitate the delivery of meaningful impact and better support the recruitment of PGRS.

Our plans are underpinned by Abertay's strategic commitment over the next five years to invest in and support around 15 fully funded R-LINCS PhD studentships, funded PhD studentships for newly appointed academic staff (subject to the approval of a research plan that is aligned with the R-LINCS2 objectives), Abertay Futures Scholarships, Pump Priming awards, and Open Access Publication awards.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Based on proven areas of expertise members of the Unit contribute consistently to the knowledge base, the research community, and the wider society. To sustain our productive engagement with the research base, the Sociology Unit at Abertay encourages both individual and collective research projects depending on the exigencies of the research problem. Individuals contribute to the discipline with single-authored outputs in areas such as social theory, disciplinary history and political sociology, while more directly applied forms of social research require collaboration with colleagues within and beyond Abertay.

4.1 Contribution to the research base
Our contributions are reflected in sustained **scholarly outputs** over the period. Since 2014 the Unit has produced 82 scholarly outputs, comprising 48 journal articles, two single-authored books, two co-edited books and thirty book chapters, as well as a number of other outputs such as reports and reviews. Law co-edited a special issue of *Human Figurations* (2017) on 'Comparative-Historical Sociology as Antidote to the 'Crackpot Realism' of the Twenty-First Century', and De Paoli co-edited a special issue of *Co-Design* (2019). Law co-edited the international volume *Sociological Amnesia* (2015) intended as a corrective to the selective history of the discipline and is currently co-editing the authoritative international handbook *Anthem Companion to Norbert Elias* (Anthem Press, 2023). Drawing on her research experience Martin co-edited *Introduction to Policing Research* (2015) specifically for inducting a new generation of students into social research on policing.

The Unit also produced notable single-authored books that have been well received and widely reviewed by the discipline. Memos' widely reviewed *Castoriadis and Critical Theory* (2014) reassesses Castoriadis' contribution to Critical Theory in light of the crisis of left-wing politics and modern capitalism. Memos further develops his analysis of critical theory in a forthcoming book (Routledge, 2021) and has been commissioned by Bloomsbury Academic publishers to produce *Continuing Critical Theory,* the first full-length study to reflect upon the contribution of the Open Marxist tradition to critical social theory. Law's Social Theory for Today (2014) elucidates the historical relationship between crisis and social theory as a means to recognise the consequences of recurring intellectual and ideological disputes for disciplinary knowledge. Law's textbook *Key Concepts in Classical Social Theory* (Sage, 2011) was translated into Farsi by leading Iranian sociologist Farhang Ershad (Agah Publishers, Tehran, 2017).

Our staff are active members of a range of national and international **scholarly bodies** and professional networks like the British Sociological Association, the International Social Theory Consortium, the International Critical Theory Society, the Cornelius Castoriadis Agora International Network, the British Association of Social and Political Philosophy, the European Sociological Association, International Sociological Association, International Visual Sociology Association, the Scottish Alliance for Geoscience, Environment and Society (SAGES), and as a member of British Criminology Society's Women's Criminal Justice Network Steering Group.

Staff contribute to and help organise **scholarly conferences**, including the Czech Technical University conference scientific committee (Academic Conferences Association), and co-convene the Social Divisions and Identities stream of the British Sociological Association (BSA) annual conference. We also co-convene the BSA Scotland Study Group and convened 'Crossing the divide: searching for innovations in learning between criminal justice and public health' for the 2018 Law Enforcement and Public Health Conference, Toronto, Canada.

We are regularly invited to present **keynote addresses** at policy and academic events. For example, Martin gave the keynote address to the 2019 London Police College International Conference of Police Education; Law has given keynotes at the annual Association of Media Education in Scotland conference and at a British Educational Research Association event on hybrid social theory and education research; De Paoli presented to the ICT 2015 Innovate, Connect, Transform event in Lisbon organised by the European Commission on the subject of 'Cyber Skills'; and Waiton gave keynote addresses to the Family Education Trust on early intervention and the 'expert class' in 2019 and on the Future of the Welfare State for the Ax:son Johnson Foundation in 2015.

As academic citizens we frequently undertake **peer review** for journals including *Social Studies of Science*, *Sociological Review*, *CoDesign*, *The Sociological Quarterly*, *Journal of Youth Studies*, *Environmental Politics*, *Mobilization*, *Sociological Research Online, Criminology and Criminal Justice*, *Philosophy Today*, *Constellations*, *Theoria, Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology*, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, and *The Police Journal*. We participate as members of journal editorial boards such as *Civic Sociology*, *Journal of Applied Social Theory*, and *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social and Community Studies*. As active scholars in our respective fields we are regularly invited to review monograph proposals for publishers such as Anthem Press, Bloomsbury Academic, Bristol University Press, SAGE, Routledge, Palgrave, and Taylor and Francis, and as Associate Editor for the Oxford University Press Criminal Justice Project. Colleagues act as peer-reviewers and panel members for grant applications for both national (such as the UKRI fellowships, ESRC, AHRC, SGSAH) and international bodies (e.g. NOW Netherlands, Flanders, HEI Ireland).

4.2 Academic and non-academic collaboration
Academic collaboration beyond Abertay includes Martin's Home Office-funded study with educationalists and organisational analysts of changing police forces' approaches to training, learning and development as well as the Skills for Justice collaboration between the Open University, Canterbury Christ Church University, and Edinburgh Napier University. Graham collaborated with Sociologists and Criminologists at Stirling and Glasgow to examine the impact of organised crime on Scottish communities.

Through participation in **Europe-wide research consortia** and European research events the Unit has developed solid and sustainable working relationships with researchers across the continent, leading to collaborative funding bids (section 3), research outputs and research leadership development. Within the European research context these include roles such as executive member of the European Society of Criminology Policing Working Group, universities and research centres in countries such as Italy (University of Trento, Fondazione Bruno Kessler), France (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, CNRS Huma-Num), Greece (Centre for Research & Technology – Hellas, KEMEA, the National Greek Centre for Security Studies), the Netherlands (the Dyne Foundation), Portugal (Madeira Institute of Technology),

Poland (Polish Platform for Homeland Security), Germany (the Max Weber Society). Across such projects the Unit also worked with a range of European SMEs and end-users organisations for example in Greece (such as Draxis Environmental), Croatia (such as Centre for Peace Studies), Italy (such as Basic Income Network), and the Czech Republic (such as Youth and Environment Europe).

The strong relationships that we have built with a diverse range of research users and publics lend our research wider impact beyond that captured by the Impact Case Studies alone. Our **external engagement** sustains and nurtures impact across a diverse range of agencies. In the field of criminal justice, for example, organisations include the National Police Learning and Development Working Group in collaboration with the National Police Chief Council and College of Policing, the Scottish Government, Scottish Police Authority, Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, Medics Against Violence, Navigators Scotland, Northamptonshire Constabulary, Essex Constabulary, International Association of Chiefs of Police and Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

This activity has led to a number of further impacts in the areas of rehabilitation, organised crime, the police as a learning organisation, and the policing of cybercrime. A report on cybercrime was presented to a variety of stakeholders including the Scottish Police, representatives from the Scottish Government and other police forces across Europe (including the Netherlands and Poland). Among other relevant activities, a member of the Unit designed a Privacy & Cybersecurity quiz for ENISA (European Network and Information Security Agency), directed at the general public with a view of offering a playful way to engage with issues around cybersecurity, which has featured on the European Cybersecurity Month Website since 2015. Members of the Unit also collaborated in the creation of a Serious Game for the Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (WRASAC) on the subject of sexual consent for teenagers. The Unit has made a point of developing deep working relationships with the local organisations in Dundee, most notably with WRASAC, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Dundee City Council for projects on social innovation and education and issues around online safety for children.

Supported by External and Corporate Relations UoA21 staff are regularly called upon to provide expert comment to a range of **media** sources, from national newspapers such as *The Times*, *The Herald*, *The Scotsman*, *The Independent*, to the local press *The Courier*, *Evening Telegraph*, *Press and Journal*, broadcast media like BBC News, Sky News, BBC Radio Scotland, and social media.

We will further develop productive and outcome-focused working relationships with external partners. Professor Martin will lead our **partnership strategy** by mentoring others to develop external engagement plans. Staff will benefit from her extensive experience of impactful research through well-defined stakeholder partnerships that include the Home Office, Scottish Prison Service, Police Scotland, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and National Police Chief Council, Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association, and, since 2016, as Associate Director of the Education and Leadership Network for SIPR. At national level the Unit benefits from a productive working relationship with the Open University's Centre for Policing and Research through Martin's leadership role as Project Academic Director for the Transformation of Police Learning and Development research collaboration between 2017 and 2019. Other notable collaborations include working with Stirling University on a successful EPSRC grant to co-design a prototype platform for managing environmental/recycling data and with Cambridge University's Psychometrics Department on a European Project. Our responsiveness to national priorities is well illustrated by Graham's evaluation of mobile working practices for Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority.