

<b>Institution:</b> University of Huddersfield
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 34: Communications, Cultural and Media Studies
<p><b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p><b><u>Unit context and structure:</u></b>  At the start of this REF cycle provisions in Communications, Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Huddersfield focused on journalism training with no developed research culture. An ambitious development programme began in 2015, following non-submission to REF2014, resulting in the creation of a new Department of Media, Journalism and Film in 2017 situated within the School of Music, Humanities and Media. In 2019, the addition of a second subject group (Drama, Theatre and Performance) led to the formation of the current Department of Media and Performance. This reorganisation aimed to strengthen interdisciplinary research, while maintaining Media and Performance as separate subject areas, reflected through two organisationally autonomous research groups: Media, Journalism and Film (UoA34) and Drama, Theatre and Performance (UoA33b).</p> <p>As a subject area, Media, Journalism and Film (MJF) consists of 11 full-time permanent members of staff returned to the REF: two lecturers (Hessler, Irak), six senior lecturers (Hill, Litherland, McCulloch, Salamon, Saunders, Sorensen) and three professors (Hills, Johnson, Sandvoss). Three additional full-time staff members are completing their doctoral studies and do not qualify as having significant responsibility for research (Jones, Pringle, Stoker). MJF also includes two colleagues on industry practitioner contracts (0.5 FTE) without contractual responsibility for research.</p> <p><b><u>Research and impact strategy:</u></b>  In line with the University's institutional strategy map (REF5a), MJF's research and impact strategy during this REF period has been centred on transforming from a training-focused unit failing to achieve research excellence into a research-intensive subject area that is <b>disciplinarily coherent, international, interdisciplinary</b> and producing research with <b>impact</b> beyond academia. This included a significant programme of inward investment (<b>£330K in total</b>).</p> <p><b><u>Disciplinary coherence</u></b> has focused on developing Huddersfield as an internationally-recognised centre for research in <b>participatory culture and digital media platforms</b>. These areas of Communications, Cultural and Media Studies are crucial in a contemporary media ecology characterised by convergence, platformisation and novel opportunities for participation by and between users/audiences and producers/industries. They also have specific relevance for industry, policy and civic society, enabling us to embed impact and knowledge exchange into the heart of our strategy. Our research expertise encompasses both contemporary and historically-grounded analyses of forms of media use and participation and their interplay with technologies, industries and socio-political change. This disciplinary coherence is given breadth through expertise that cuts across film, TV and screen media, political communication, journalism, media sport, popular music and gaming.</p> <p>Our research in participatory culture and digital platforms <b>centres the experiences of users/audiences</b> in order to critically address the changing ways in which different forms of media and culture shape societies, economies and politics. Our international reputation in this area was bolstered through the appointment of two major figures in fan and audience studies as Professors to the unit (Sandvoss in 2015 and Hills in 2016). Notable examples of our research in</p>

this area include: underexplored aspects of audience practice, such as theatre, art and literature fandoms (Hills), the intersections of political participation, (anti-)fandom and populism (Sandvoss), the interplay between politics and sports fandom in Turkey (Irak), histories of the production, dissemination and consumption of sporting and gaming entertainments, including the first full-length study of British professional wrestling (Litherland), and women's experiences with music, whether as fans of metal or in negotiating sexual violence at gigs (Hill).

A key theme running through MJF's research into media participation is the impact of **digitalisation and platformisation on people's experiences of, and engagement with, the media**. Here our research draws on political economy, cultural and media industry approaches. The appointment of Johnson as Professor in 2019 brought an internationally-recognised research leader in screen media industries to strengthen our research in this area. Notable examples include: co-directing a 5-year international study of the post-Disney Star Wars franchise and its audiences (McCulloch), theorising the ways in which online TV works to constrain user agency (Johnson), analysing people's engagement with data visualisations (Hill), and tracing changing practices of audience measurement in the TV industry (Hessler). This research extends more broadly into **critical inquiries into the impact of digital media platforms on cultural labour, representation, identity and political communication**. Notable examples include: evidencing the importance of online pornography to understanding digital economics and labour (Saunders), demonstrating the intersection of digital media, populism and democratisation (Sorensen), and identifying e-lancers as a new category of digital labour in a platform economy (Salamon).

This disciplinary coherence is reflected in the creation of new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including an **MA in Participatory Culture**, enabling synergies between research excellence and teaching.

MJF's research in participatory culture and digital media platforms was given formal structure through the launch of the **Centre for Participatory Culture (CPC)** in 2017, led by Hills, of which all research-active staff and PGR students within the unit are members. The CPC advances understanding of the cultures, identities and experiences of participation across popular culture, media, arts, politics and beyond, and the role of industries and media technologies in facilitating and/or restricting cultures of participation. Notable activities include hosting the 3-day international Fan Studies Network conference in 2017, with participants from 19 countries.

**Internationalisation** has been fostered further through a recruitment strategy focused on international reach and excellence. The share of international staff has increased from under 6% at the beginning of the REF cycle to over 25% by the census date. Our internationalisation strategy aligns with the University's strategic emphasis on international research partnerships leading to co-authored publications and research funding applications (REF5a) and has been underpinned by three successful bids to the University's strategic internationalisation research fund in 2019 for £15,185 to pump-prime projects with partners in the USA and Australia. The international profile of MJF is strengthened by the leadership roles our staff have occupied in three international subject associations. Combined, these activities have strengthened our engagement with international research communities, leading to links with more than 20 overseas institutions and co-organisation of seven overseas conferences.

**Interdisciplinary research** is core to our identity as a unit and our staff have collaborated with scholars in multiple disciplines, including music, gender, sociology, politics, performance and health studies. The CPC provides a focal point for developing and sustaining interdisciplinary

research. Membership is drawn from staff across six Schools/Departments within the University working in areas that include participatory action research, user experience design, marketing, and music fandom. Interdisciplinary collaborations stemming from the CPC include: a bid to the AHRC (awaiting outcome) with the Department of Behavioural and Social Sciences to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the construction of participatory communities, and a successful bid with the Department of Politics to the University Research Fund (URF) for £11,900 to undertake a pilot project into the performance of democracy in transitional democratic states.

The unit **leads two interdisciplinary Areas of Strategic Research Importance (ASRIs)** that respond to societal and economic challenges and end user need and are used to inform internal resource allocation through the URF: Digital Cultures and Screen Media, and Participatory Culture and Social Media (REF5a). The formation of the Department of Media and Performance in 2019 further strengthens interdisciplinary research within the unit in relation to screen media, politics, performance and fandom. This forms part of a broader School-wide collaboration with the Yorkshire Film and Television School (formally launching in 2021).

**Impact** has been enabled through a strategic focus on creating **distinctive research on digital and participatory cultures that drives positive social, cultural and economic change**. This is exemplified in the unit's **impact** case studies. Healthy Music Audiences combines audience research methods with issues of identity and industry collaboration in order to translate research into guidelines that have helped the music industry combat sexual violence at live events. Routes to Content utilises industrial and audience research into the discoverability and prominence of audiovisual content to shape industry strategy and media policy and strengthen public service broadcasting. Both case studies have been supported by financial investment from the University of almost £40K and impact sabbaticals for the lead impact case study authors.

These case studies epitomise our **strategic approach to impact**, which aligns with the Concordat for Public Engagement with Research and operates along the principle that **impact is often best generated by producing research in consultation and collaboration with user communities**. This non-linear approach of involving stakeholders as partners in the research facilitates uptake of the findings and enables the construction of on-going relationships, evidenced by Hill's appointment as a trustee of White Ribbon and Johnson's continuing work with Channel 4. The success of this strategy is observable in our growing national and international reputation for research with value to industry, policy and wider civic society. Highlights include Hills's presentation at a major fan convention (São Paulo Comic-con Experience, Brazil), funded by Brazilian broadcaster Globo (2017), Hill's TEDx talk at Newcastle College (2019), Johnson's appointment as special advisor to the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Inquiry into the Future of Public Service Broadcasting (2020) and invitation to speak at the prestigious European Broadcasting Union (EBU) Media Summit for executives across Europe's public service broadcasters (2020).

Beyond the impact case studies, the strategy of **enabling the wider contribution of research through collaboration with user communities** is reflected in the unit's AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) for a postgraduate research (PGR) student to explore how North Hill Apps might extend their app design expertise into the education sector. Our staff have also conducted research in dialogue with the data visualisation industry (Hill), international audience measurement companies, Nielsen and Kantar (Hessler), and journalists (Jones, Salamon, Stoker). Internally, the vitality of this research and impact culture has been supported by additional funding to further impact-oriented research projects. This includes £7,848 to

support research on the visibility of female politicians in Nigerian media and just under £20K to support qualitative research on the interplay between political fandom and left-wing populism in the 2019 UK general election and an examination of the impact of political partisanship on engagement with health information during the COVID-19 outbreak. The growing reputation of the unit for research with impact is evidenced by the invitation to participate in two collaborative research projects (XR Stories and SIGN) that aim to support the development of the creative industries in the Yorkshire region. These projects involve MJF, Music, and Computer Science at the University of Huddersfield, demonstrating the ways in which **the unit creates opportunities for research that is both impactful and interdisciplinary**.

The appointment in 2018 of two high-profile visiting professors from the media industries further **embeds engagement with user communities into our research culture**. John Wilson has expertise in managing strategic change in the wake of digitalisation at Johnston Press (now JPI Media). Neil Benson led Trinity Mirror's (now Reach) digital-first transformation programme. The international reach of our impact is further evidenced through Saunders's role as academic advisor for an opera in development by the Juillard School, New York. Beyond industry, our impact strategy facilitates public engagement with our research, both nationally and internationally. Highlights include presentations at the first ever festival of wrestling storytelling in Europe (2018) and at the major fan convention Gallifrey One in the USA (2018). Our staff are also regular contributors to parliamentary consultations.

#### **Ethics, integrity and open research:**

**Research ethics and integrity** are central to the vitality of MFJ's research culture and are managed through the School Research Committee, which provides ethical approval for any research involving human subject data. School research ethics and integrity activities and action plans are reviewed annually by the University Research Committee to ensure that all units adhere to the principles of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the University's Code of Practice for Research. All staff and students have access to online research integrity training from Epigeum (which is compulsory for PGR students) and research leaders within MJF have received dedicated training on managing research integrity and misconduct.

MJF is also supported by the School in progressing towards an **open research environment** to ensure that publicly funded research is accessible and transparent. Research and Enterprise assist staff in making outputs and data available in open access University repositories where possible, including providing funds to support the costs of open access publishing (REF5a). Staff within the unit are editorial board members of four open access journals and the unit hosts the journal, Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies, which combines open access publishing with a process of open peer review to encourage a culture of critical-supportive reviewing.

Having focused, in this REF period, on creating a thriving and inclusive research environment with an international reputation in participatory culture and digital platforms, moving forward our strategy is to capitalise on our upward trajectory to ensure the ongoing vitality and sustainability of our research in Communications, Cultural and Media Studies.

To achieve this **our aims for the next REF period are:**

A1. To consolidate our international reputation for research in participatory culture and digital platforms by building regional and international structures for collaborative and interdisciplinary research.

A2. To deepen and extend our expertise in platformisation, mediatisation, digital and screen media cultures through research focused on 'routes to content', which centres analysis on the ways in which media is encountered and experienced, and how this is structured through changing industrial, economic, political, social and technological forces.

A3. To maintain and develop our research culture to generate impactful research that contributes to the creation and maintenance of diverse, pluralistic and democratic media environments and societies.

A4. To further build investment and support in our research culture through increased funding.

## 2. People

### Staffing strategy:

Our staffing strategy for this REF period has sought to increase the research intensity of the unit through a combination of recruitment and staff development.

**Recruitment** focused on attracting researchers with exceptional potential at different career stages to **deepen the vitality and sustainability of MJF's research culture, broaden the diversity of our unit, increase the international scope of our research, and expand our capacity to undertake research with impact.** During the assessment period, the unit has made 14 academic appointments, six at lecturer, five at senior lecturer and three at professorial rank. The three professorial posts were created with the support of University-wide investment initiatives. Sandvoss's appointment in 2015 was funded to lead the strategic development of the unit. Hills (2016) and Johnson (2019) were appointed under the University's Research Excellence Staff Scheme designed to attract outstanding research leaders to the institution, including ring-fencing 50% of staff time for research over the first three years of appointment. Alongside established research leaders, we have sought to attract new talent to enrich our expertise in emergent areas of digital media scholarship (73% of returned staff are within 8 years of completing their PhDs and in their first full-time, permanent post). These include social media, performance and populism (Sorensen), online pornography and the digital economy (Saunders), and digital labour and unionisation (Salamon). All staff are HEA Fellows, apart from the three international colleagues appointed in 2020 who are actively working towards HEA fellowships. Increased **diversity** from 2014 to 2020 is evidenced by the **share of female staff members rising from 25% to 50%** (46% among returned staff), along with **an increase in the international make-up of staff from 6% to 25%** over this period.

**Staff development** focused on strengthening research capability in line with the University's strategic aim that **all full-time staff hold a PhD and be research active** (REF5a). The University has provided bursaries to enable six members of staff within the unit to study for doctoral degrees at the Universities of Cardiff, Goldsmiths, York and Huddersfield. Three members of the unit gained a PhD within this period with a further three nearing completion of their doctoral studies (with expected submission dates in 2020 and 2022). We have also supported industry practitioners on 0.5 FTE contracts without contractual responsibility for research to undertake postgraduate study through Departmental stipends, ensuring an inclusive research community that enables all staff to achieve their potential. The success of this strategy is evidenced by the number of **full-time staff within the unit with a PhD increasing from 20% in 2014 to 80% by July 2020**, which we expect to rise to 100% by 2022.

**Workload** management has ensured that the workload of all academic staff in the unit, with the exception of those in managerial roles (Sandvoss), has exceeded contractual research time allocations significantly, with commonly **no less than 35% of contract time dedicated to research activities**. Our focus on the sustainability and future health of the unit is further reflected in the absence of short-term employment: **all full-time staff are on permanent contracts**, ensuring stability of employment in accordance with the Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers (REF5a).

The University achieved **National Wellbeing Charter accreditation** in 2018 and all staff have access to SilverCloud, an on-demand digital mental health platform, in addition to 24/7 access to the University's Wellbeing Service, and support from mental health first aiders. The University's dedicated 'Report and Support' online tool ensures that all students, staff and visitors to the campus have a safe and supportive environment through which incidents of hate crimes, bullying, harassment, sexual violence and anti-social behaviour can be reported and addressed. This includes the opportunity to remain anonymous and to access one-to-one support from a Wellbeing Advisor.

**Staff development, research planning, and support for Early Career Researchers (ECRs):** **Staff development** is managed through four layers of support. Staff retain autonomy over their individual research agendas. Six-monthly **research audits** with the unit's research lead review achievements and focus on the strategic planning of research and impact. Research audits are integrated with **staff appraisals** to facilitate recognition and reward for research and impact.

These two formal layers work alongside two informal layers of support. All research active staff are allocated a **research mentor** from the professoriate in the unit to provide a sustained informal relationship aimed at supporting staff in all aspects of their research and career development. The unit also has a strong culture of **peer support and feedback**, creating an **inclusive research environment in which all staff feel personally invested**. Peer support initiatives are developed bottom-up and include the creation of three research clusters (politics/identity, audiences/fans, and industries/production) that meet once a term, fortnightly research writing workshops and regular reading groups. Peer support and research autonomy are further embedded by involving all staff in the development of the unit's research strategy through annual research awaydays and individual consultations. These informal structures work alongside a programme of regular research seminars and collaborative events organised through the CPC.

These formal and informal layers of support have been complemented by the provision of institutional-level and subject-focused **research training** and development workshops. Central training from the University is mapped against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (REF5a) and includes workshops on impact, research funding, output preparation, research integrity, postgraduate support and supervision, as well as leadership training through the Chartered Management Institution (CMI), enabling Sandvoss to achieve a CMI Fellowship. Given the focus of the unit on the study of audiences and participation, resource allocation has addressed the "relative paucity of methodological sophistication, especially, though not only, in relation to studies of audiences" noted by UoA36 in REF2014. In response the unit has offered **methods day schools for staff and PGR students** led by internationally recognised experts in quantitative social sciences (Prof. Ian Brunton-Smith) and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Dr Graham Gibbs). We have also supported attendance at methods training operated through the National Centre for Research Methods as well as other methods-focused conferences, workshops and summer schools nationally and internationally, spending over £16K

on methods training in this REF cycle. Identifying methods training opportunities are central to research audits and mentoring.

Research active staff (including those undertaking PhDs) are eligible to apply for a **sabbatical** of one semester after eight semesters of service, or a year-long sabbatical after 16 semesters, to provide relief from all teaching and administration duties. While staff with PGR supervision responsibilities remain part of the supervisory team, co-supervision enables the unit to reduce the individual burden during sabbaticals. The unit operates a rota system so that staff can embed sabbaticals into research planning. Flexibility is built into the system, enabling staff to apply for two semesters of 50% leave (whilst retaining 50% of their regular teaching and administrative duties) if conducive to achieving their research objectives. Externally funded periods of leave fall outside of this policy and do not delay eligibility for sabbaticals. During the assessment period, three members of the unit were granted a research sabbatical, a consequence of the recent formation of MJF as a research-intensive subject area. We expect all research active staff in the unit to have completed a sabbatical by 2025.

In addition to standard research sabbaticals, staff are eligible to apply for **impact sabbaticals** which are supported by School funding. The unit additionally supports impact work through reductions in non-research workload up to full sabbatical leave. Such allocations are in addition to general research time allocation and do not impact on eligibility for research sabbaticals. In preparation for REF2021 **the unit awarded two impact sabbaticals to support the unit's impact case studies and allocated an additional 2350 hours to support impact** in addition to standard research time allocations through the Department's workload model. These sabbaticals and workload allocations are essential to our impact strategy in enabling staff to have the time and flexibility to engage with national and international user communities.

The system of staff development, support and training outlined above has been crucial to ensuring the vitality and sustainability of the unit given the high percentage of early career staff. At the census date the UoA had **five ECRs (45% of returned staff)** as defined by para. 148 of the REF Guidance for submissions (IR from 1 August 2016) but who for various reasons chose not to declare their individual circumstances. We have **focused significant resource on initiatives targeted specifically at ECRs**. This has included:

- a reduction in teaching and administrative workloads in the first three years of appointment
- funding for international scholarly activities, including establishing/developing research collaborations, co-authorship and conference attendance
- teaching buy-out for bid writing and preparation
- short-term teaching relief or 'mini-sabbaticals' for the completion of publication projects
- pump-priming for new research or impact.

The success of these support mechanisms is reflected in the fact that **four out of the six staff appointed to lecturer positions have gained promotion during this assessment cycle**.

#### **Support for PGRs:**

Although only four PhDs have been awarded within this REF cycle, the number of registered students undertaking PGR programmes in Communications, Cultural and Media Studies has increased by **over 350% from July 2013 to July 2020**, demonstrating **significant growth in our ability to attract excellent postgraduate researchers**. The University's Vice-Chancellor's scheme offers fee-waiver scholarships to high-performing graduates from our undergraduate and masters programmes, enabling us to support talented students wishing to pursue postgraduate research. We also offer additional fee-waiver scholarships on a competitive basis that are open to all applicants. Eight students have benefitted from these schemes in the REF

period and early success is evidenced by one funded student securing employment at a Russell Group University. We have also received external funding for a PhD through the AHRC's CDA scheme.

All PGR students have a main and a second supervisor and receive at least one hour of supervision per month (typically more frequently). Supervisors and internal examiners receive dedicated training, with refresher courses every 3 years. Our **inclusive research culture ensures that PGR students are integrated into our research environment** through participation in research seminars, cluster meetings, training and membership of the CPC. These provide opportunities for informal contact with members of staff and to network with other academics nationally and internationally. Progression vivas are held after 9 and 21 months, for which students are required to submit an annual report detailing their progress and to discuss their research with a panel consisting of two academics from the subject area who are not involved in the student's supervision. PGRs produce a Skills Audit at the start of their programme, enabling **training** to be embedded from the outset, and research training needs, including research integrity and ethics, form part of the discussion in progression vivas. PGR students are able to access a dedicated programme of in-person and online research training from the Graduate School which includes the University's Teaching Assistant Preparation Programme which is required for all PGR students teaching within the Department. We provide opportunities to gain teaching experience to those students who wish to do so.

We also support students in developing their research careers by attending and presenting at conferences. Doctoral students in the unit are eligible for £800 in support of conference attendance and can apply for additional funding through the early career support fund operated by the School. **Employability** is further enhanced by providing opportunities for PGR students to participate in research projects within the Department, including projects on political fandom and left-wing populism and our two impact case studies. Beyond Huddersfield, our staff have offered **national and international PGR training**, including a talk at the Transnational TV PhD course at Aarhus University, Denmark (2017), a keynote at a postgraduate conference at Royal Holloway University (2019), and a presentation at the University of London's Screen Studies postgraduate training conference (2019).

#### **Equality, diversity and inclusion:**

MJF has addressed the significant gender imbalance within its staffing at the start of the REF period: **the percentage of female staff increased from 25% to 50%** and **50% of selected REF outputs are authored by female members of staff**, in line with the University REF Code of Practice output selection criteria. The measures successfully implemented by the School to enhance gender equality during this REF cycle were recognised through an Athena Swan Bronze award in 2020. Additionally, the University runs LGBTQI+, BAME, Women, and Disability staff networks and has signed up to the Race Equality Charter. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and unconscious bias training form part of the induction programme for all staff involved in appointment panels and leadership roles. Anyone involved in REF-related advice or decision-making has undertaken additional EDI training, with refreshers every six months.

**EDI** are standing items to all Departmental and School committees offering opportunities for continued reflection on enhancing processes and structures. These reflections have resulted in a number of changes to working practices during the assessment period: to support staff and PGRs with caring responsibilities, for instance, we have rescheduled all research activities (research seminars, CPC meetings, research cluster meetings and internal training) in lunch-time slots which are free from timetabled teaching. In accordance with the Concordat to Support



the Development of Researchers, we have provided the **flexibility** necessary for successful research performance by making adjustments to teaching in line with caring responsibilities. The gender imbalance of staff at the beginning of the REF period has been addressed through the Department's recruitment strategy which has included ensuring person specifications fully reflect diversity and inclusivity in their role requirements. Staff input into the allocation of mentors enables the most appropriate support, such as the allocation of a female mentor for female members of staff if requested. Research audits and staff appraisals offer spaces to identify the specific requirements of individual researchers. Examples have included a shift in workload allocation between semesters to facilitate the needs of staff returning from parental leave. The University has a specific policy to ensure that pregnant PGR students and new parents receive equitable, fair and sensitive treatment, with sufficient flexibility to enable staff and postgraduate students to make informed decisions about the best ways to manage their research.

An example of the unit's management in meeting **EDI** challenges has been our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The unit reacted promptly to the pandemic by reviewing all processes for research including fieldwork, research-related travel, and in situ interaction with participants, fellow researchers and other members of the Department in late February and implemented change in early March preceding wider closures of University campuses. This included advancing the integration of home and office working through the use of digital workflow software, scheduling apps, databases and video conferencing platforms. Staff on sabbatical leave were able to request additional leave if the impact of family and caring responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted on the sabbatical period.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### **Research funding and strategies for generating research income:**

MJF's research income total of £69,864 reflects the transition of the unit during the REF cycle. Our strategy within this REF period regarding research funding has focused on **building capacity** and **providing inward investment** in order to strengthen the number, size, diversity and quality of bids submitted. The success of this strategy is reflected in **the increased number and size of research bids submitted over the census period**. In the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years the unit submitted 15 bids worth £1,510,903 compared to 17 bids worth a total of £520,829 over the previous 5 years. With 50% of submitted staff appointed since 2018 we anticipate that the impact of this strategy will be felt fully in terms of research income in the next REF period.

MJF's strategy for generating research income is underpinned by the philosophy that **a strong foundation for support across the research cycle enhances the quantity, quality and success rate of bids submitted**. Alongside dedicated funding to support the development of research projects and collaborations, research audits direct staff towards internal and external support for funding, impact and methods training, and mentors offer constructive feedback on research in progress, review draft publications and funding bids, and offer guidance on publication and funding strategy. Staff development structures, internal funding and the organisational infrastructures outlined below emphasise **support for ECRs** with less experience in applying for research funding. For example, Sorensen and Litherland have received School funding targeted specifically at ECRs to support their research. Submission of research bids is further incentivised by ensuring that **all staff receive full buy-out for any time costed within a funding application** in addition to research time allocated in their workload.

Combined, these measures have helped to **increase the number of bids submitted** and **diversify the sources of funding**, including seven bids to European funders and interdisciplinary bids to Wellcome and the AHRC. We have begun to have success in securing funding from non-standard sources. In the REF period this has included £2,000 from the Association of Journalism Education to support research into journalism ethics by one of our staff members pursuing a PhD and £1,000 from the Being Human Festival to fund the 'Wrestling Resurgence' event attended by over 100 people that drew on Litherland's research into wrestling culture. Participation in the SIGN project (funded by Research England and starting in April 2020) brought with it £25K of funding, with the ability to apply for additional funds, although these have not yet been spent within this REF period. Johnson's appointment as special advisor to the DCMS Select Committee (April 2020 – March 2021) is expected to generate a total of £8,800 (including £1,980 up to 31 July 2020).

#### **Organisational infrastructure for supporting research:**

The **CPC** provides a reading group, writing workshops, weekly research seminars with internal and external speakers, conferences and events for staff and PGRs within and beyond the unit. The CPC has hosted regional, national and international scholars presenting research on issues such as streaming and its environmental impacts (University of Leeds); transmedia engagement (University of Salford); ethnographies of algorithmic culture (University of Sussex); and media convergence in China (Anhui Normal University). Collaboration is further fostered by the development of the Yorkshire Film and Television School (YFTS), an interdisciplinary partnership building on expertise across the School in media industries, screen studies, screenwriting, music and screen performance. Collaborative research is a core component of the strategy for the YFTS, which has already led to the submission of a cross-school bid to the Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships scheme. Interdisciplinary research is also facilitated through staff membership of other research centres within the University, such as the Secure Societies Institute and the Centre for Music, Culture and Identity.

Over this REF period, staff within the unit have had **success in applying for a total of £232K from a range of School/University schemes to support research and impact**. These funds have pump-primed new projects leading to outputs and major research bids, supported impact, and enabled staff to network with international research collaborators. The unit also benefits from **devolved and autonomous research funding** which has supplemented School/University research initiatives enabling us to control the implementation of our research strategy. In addition to the School/University funding above, a **total of £98K of unit-specific funds** have been used to provide almost £44K to pump-prime research projects and support impact, £31K for dissemination, £16k for research/methods training and £7K to support PGRs/visiting scholars. The unit offers **uncapped financial support** to all research-active staff for research activities, including conference attendance/organisation, empirical research, bid development, fieldwork, archive visits, training, hardware and license fees, with **all applications fully funded** in the REF period.

As part of the School of Music, Humanities and Media, one of the University's most research-intensive and successful Schools measured by REF2014 outcomes, the unit has benefitted from an **institution-leading research culture** providing support from scholars with strong track records in research funding applications. For example, when developing funding bids staff within the unit receive mentoring from experienced researchers across the School with a record of success in the same scheme. The School's internal peer review process additionally ensures all bids receive feedback from two senior academics in the School.

Beyond the University, the unit has seized opportunities to participate in regional initiatives (such as SIGN and XR Stories) that provide additional infrastructural support in the form of research networks and funding. It has also **developed strategic relationships with regional stakeholders**, such as the BBC, Channel 4 and Kirkless Council. Given our research strengths in the intersections of audiences/users and industries/producers, these strong links with regional user communities provide a vital additional structure for supporting the future health, and enabling the wider contribution of, our research.

**Operational infrastructure for supporting research:**

Within the School, MJF is supported through a **dedicated Research Development Manager** who provides training and one-to-one support in developing funding applications, alongside a wider post-award team. The appointment of a **permanent School Impact Officer** in 2016 provides specialist expertise in impact strategy, evaluation and stakeholder engagement. The impact case study authors have also benefitted from four impact training sessions over the REF period.

MJF is based in its own dedicated building. It includes two TV studios and five radio studios. Industry-standard editing software from both AVID and the Adobe Creative Suite is available across more than 60 machines, along with more than 50 JVC and Panasonic video camera kits, plus a similar number of audio recorders and mobile devices, all supported by a dedicated technical team. Research assistants and doctoral students in MJF have an allocated room within the building in which to work. PGR students additionally have use of a dedicated study space within the newly built Oastler Building, which also provides a space for large-scale research events and presentations. Elsewhere on campus there is a purpose-built film screening room. To support our interdisciplinary research in screen media through the YFTS, the University is investing in building a circa 300m<sup>2</sup> single-camera sound stage. All staff and students have access to a wide range of software, databases and online journal packages, including Qualtrics, SPSS, NVivo, ScienceDirect, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Project Muse, OUP etc. In addition, the library provides a free interlibrary loan service to access resources beyond the available collections and a subscription to Box of Broadcasts. Subject and academic librarians are assigned to each subject area and the library contributes to a programme of skills development sessions for PGR students throughout their studies. The unit has also invested in institutional membership of the Association of Journalism Education (AJE), International Communication Association (ICA) and the Media Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA).

The operational, organisational, formal and informal support structures outlined above provide a thriving, inclusive and sustainable research culture to ensure the future health of the unit.

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

**Support for the effectiveness of research collaborations, networks and partnerships:**

As detailed above, the unit has invested in **engaging with international research communities**, leading to relationships with over 20 overseas universities. These collaborations have resulted in co-authored publications (with universities in Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Australia and South Africa), a teaching exchange with Hochschule Kunste Bern in Switzerland, invitations to be on the advisory board of two bids submitted in Denmark, and the organisation of multiple conferences including overseas conferences held in the USA, Australia, Finland and the Czech Republic. Four research funding bids have been submitted through these international collaborations, with a further four research bids in preparation for submission by 2022 with international partners in Portugal, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Italy, Australia and Canada.

The University's strategic internationalisation research fund enabled the creation of **three ongoing research collaborations with strategic international partners**. One project focuses on how people find and discover media content, in collaboration with leading scholars of streaming media at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (USA), QUT and RMIT (Australia). A second examines the global challenge of sexual violence in the music industry in collaboration with scholars at the University of Melbourne and RMIT (Australia). The final project, in collaboration with the University of Technology, Sydney and QUT (Australia), is developing new methods to study the role of technologies in the contested representations of events. Two of these build out of research underpinning our impact case studies, ensuring the sustainability of our internationalisation and impact strategies.

Through **leadership roles in international subject associations** our staff have contributed to the future direction of Communications, Cultural and Media Studies. Johnson is Chair of the Media Industries and Cultural Production Section of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), McCulloch is founder and board member of the Fan Studies Network (the international academic organisation for Fan Studies), and Salamon acts as Lead Research Chair for the Culture and Critical Studies Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). In addition, Stoker is a member of MeCCSA's Local News Network and Irak is an Associate Research Fellow of Medialab at the Paris Institute of Political Studies, part of ICEMEC Mediterranean Ethnography Lab at Université Aix-Marseille in France and works with the Diasporas Lab at Université Paris Tech. Staff within the unit have also participated in major national and international collaborative research projects (detailed below).

#### **Engagement with key research beneficiaries and diverse publics:**

The unit has sought to build on Huddersfield's position between Salford (home of MediaCityUK) and Leeds (Channel 4's new national headquarters, and home to Nielsen in the UK and Sky's Digital and Technology Services campus) to develop **strategic regional partnerships with key research users**. Investment in Johnson's impact-related research has led to relationships with Channel 4 and the BBC that inform ongoing research on routes to content. Hessler's appointment expands established relationship with Nielsen in the US to the UK. Given Yorkshire's vibrant music industry – Leeds and Sheffield have dedicated local music boards and music is one of Kirkless council's strategic growth areas – the unit's investment in Hill's research on live music-going has created strategic partnerships with local councils and music venues informing on-going research in this area.

As a unit with a focus on audiences and media users, **engaging publics in our research** is central to our wider contribution. Our research appears regularly in the press, including articles in the Financial Times, BBC News website, Metro Online, Wired, International Business Times, Media Lawyer, Yorkshire Post, Hold the Front Page and Yorkshire Evening Post, as well as in articles for The Conversation reaching a total of 131,778 readers. Our staff have appeared on national and international radio programmes and podcasts, such as Radio One, Radio Leeds, TalkSport (2014), ABC Radio, Australia (2016), the Bang to Rights podcast (2018), and Swedish National Radio (2019). We have presented our research to local, national and international public-facing conferences and events, including a talk about the Leveson inquiry to the University of the Third Age (2014), a presentation at the Burning Hammer Film Festival in London (2018), presentations at two major international fan conventions in Brazil (2017) and the USA (2018), and a presentation at the annual conference for the consumer group, Voice of the Viewer and Listener (2019). Our staff have also **organised conferences that bring research and user communities together**. This has included the Historia Ludens conference on gaming

and history (2017) with journalists and museums (SS Great Britain Trust and the Royal Armouries), and the British Wrestling: History and Resurgence conference (2018) with wrestling fans and some of Britain's leading wrestlers, and a live wrestling show, resulting in the development of a full-time wrestling programme, Wrestling Resurgence.

We have a **strong commitment to sharing research with our local community**. Staff within the unit have presented and/or helped to organise a range of local festivals, including the Holmfirth Film Festival (2014-16), Huddersfield Histories (2014), Louder than Words Festival (2014), the Huddersfield Literary Festival (2014), the Deer Shed Festival (2014, 2017), and the Holmfirth Arts Festival (2018). We've engaged with ITV Yorkshire Studios, Barnsley FC, Yorkshire Cricket Club, Halifax Rugby League, Northern Lights Media, Branch FM Radio, The Yorkshire Post, The Huddersfield Examiner and independent local newspapers through numerous meetings and workshops, and provided mentoring and consultancy to Reach Beyond, HCJB-UK in Bradford (2016-18). This reflects our strong connections with the journalism sector, including the Press Association, Broadcast Journalism Training Council, Trinity Mirror/Reach and Johnston Press/JPI Media, which helped to secure two high profile visiting professors (from Johnston Press and Trinity Mirror) in 2018.

#### **Contribution to the economy and society:**

The contribution of our research to the economy and society is evidenced by an **increase in the engagement of national and international user communities with our research**, particularly in relation to the music and television industries. Through investment in impact-related research and activities our research has supported the work of not-for-profit organisations, venues, councils and workers in the music industry, including Kirklees Council and the Musicians Union (representing 32,000 musicians in the UK). Our TV-related research has been shared with major UK and international broadcasters (from the BBC to Disney), platforms (YouTube), media research and marketing agencies (Red Bee Creative, Truth), regulators (Ofcom), international industry bodies (EBU), and UK and international policy-makers (DCMS, Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services in South Africa). Our staff have collaborated with global audience research organisations (Nielsen, Kantar), judged the Royal Television Society's annual awards, and presented at a range of industry-oriented events. Highlights include presentations at: the Australian Centre for Moving Image in Melbourne (2017), the annual Innovating Media Economics conference in Belgium (2019) organised by MediaHub (a R&I hub supported by the Flemish government), the AHRC-funded Public Service Media Network's conference in 2019 that brought together academic and industry stakeholders (2019), and business engagement events oriented to the local economy at the 3M Buckley Innovation Centre at the University of Huddersfield (2019).

Research within the unit has also **contributed to policy development**. Our research has been shared with over 30 MPs and Lords and our staff have advised government committees (the DCMS Select Committee's Inquiry into the Future of Public Service Broadcasting) and contributed to five government/regulatory inquiries: the Public Interest Test consultation on BBC iPlayer (2019), the House of Lords Select Committee Inquiry on Democracy and Digital Technologies (2019), the House of Lords Select Committee Inquiry on Public Service Broadcasting (2019), the Cairncross Review into the Future of Journalism in the UK (2019) and the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee Inquiry into the Future of Journalism (2020).

#### **Contribution to sustainability of the discipline:**

Interdisciplinarity is core to our identity as a unit, supported by the CPC, with particular emphasis on **collaborating with scholars across multiple disciplines, including music, gender, sociology, politics, performance, and health studies**. Our location in the School of Music, Humanities and Media strengthens our interdisciplinary research in music and performance. In addition to the activities outlined above, we have particular strengths in metal music, evidenced by Hill's position as editor for the Metal Music and Culture book series (2016-present) and position on the editorial advisory board for Metal Music Studies (2013-present). Interdisciplinary research related to performance, has been strengthened through our new Departmental structure with Drama and Theatre Studies and broader links with performance studies at the University of the Arts in London. Much of our research is also deeply concerned with gender and identity, bolstered by collaborations with the Leicester Media School at De Montfort University (on a BA/Leverhulme project on sexual violence and popular music), the Department of Sociology at the University of York (on a doctoral project on visualising data for diverse users), and two funding bids submitted with Orebro University, Sweden (2019). We have collaborated with colleagues in Behavioural and Social Sciences, and Politics at the University of Huddersfield, building on the interdisciplinary links opened up by the CPC. Our researchers have collaborated with health studies scholars at the University of Exeter (on on-going research into the temporalities of healthcare) and the University of Nottingham (leading to a Wellcome bid on the televising of childbirth in 2019).

Our wider contribution to Communication, Cultural and Media Studies is further evidenced through collaborations on **major international and national research projects**, including:

- co-directing the World Star Wars Project, a five-year multi-perspectival study of the franchise with the University of Bournemouth,
- collaborating on the design of the Game of Thrones Audience Research Project, conducted by over 40 researchers around the world,
- co-founding the 13 Reasons Why Netflix Audiences Project, a collaboration across six UK Universities,
- participating in XR Stories and SIGN, funded by Research England, which supports our strategy to respond to the growth of the screen industries in the Yorkshire region.

**Influence, contributions to and recognition by the research base:**

Over the REF period, the 11 Category A staff in post on the 31 July 2020 have been invited to give **keynote/plenary presentations at 27 international conferences and have presented at an additional 38 international conferences**. Highlights include keynotes at the inaugural Australian Fan Studies Network conference (held at the University of Wollongong in 2017) and the first ever fan studies conference held in Poland (at Jagiellonian University in Cracow in 2019). Nationally, our staff have given 15 keynotes/plenaries and presented at 31 conferences. In addition, they have shared their research at 16 university research seminars, including four presentations at international universities, such as the Global Fandom and Digital Culture Summer School at the University of Aarhus, Denmark (2019) and the Renegade Audiences Workshop at Erasmus University in the Netherlands (2020). Our staff have been involved in organising 10 conferences (one postponed due to COVID-19), four national public engagement workshops, and one international masterclass in Australia.

Category A staff in post at the submission date have also contributed to scholarship through **external examination of 22 PhDs** (10 of which were international), and **editorial board memberships of 19 journals**, including leading international publications, such as the Journal of Cinema and Media Studies, Television and New Media, Communication, Culture and Critique

and the International Journal of Cultural Studies. Our staff have reviewed for 34 journals and 16 book publishers. They edit/co-edit two book series and are on the advisory board for one further book series. They are involved in reviewing national and international funding bids, such as for the AHRC (including through membership of the AHRC Peer Review College), the Dutch Research Council (NOW) and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Our research has been recognised in three international awards/grants from external bodies: a Fulbright Scholarship, a funded place at the Scripps Howard Journalism Entrepreneurship Institute, Arizona State University, and an Outstanding Article Award from the Popular Communication Division of the ICA. Combined this evidences the international reputation and wider contribution of MJF's research.