

<b>Institution: Newcastle University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: Sociology</b>
<p><b>Section 1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Sociology is a long-standing subject area, located in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University, the second largest School in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS). We constitute a group of 25 Teaching and Research (T&amp;R) colleagues (compared with 19 at REF2014), alongside seven Research Associates/Assistants, three Teaching and Scholarship (T&amp;S) colleagues and 27 professional services staff working across the School. We host a Research Centre, Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS), which marked its 20<sup>th</sup> year in 2019. Across the REF period we have <i>explored core sociological areas of contemporary importance, while embracing the benefits of interdisciplinarity through investing in expertise in areas such as social anthropology and bioethics</i>. Our research agenda is influenced by the School's and University's prioritisation of research aimed at addressing inequality, disadvantage, exclusion and social injustice. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) shape our research priorities, as well as how we manage and develop unit activity including recruitment, colleague development, progression, workload allocation and REF planning.</p> <p>The School provides a critical mass of infrastructure and professional services support, while as a subject area we have autonomy to direct our research priorities. We are guided by our principal objective articulated in REF2014: <i>to enhance our sustainability in carrying out high quality, internationally recognised research with significant impact that contributes to the vitality of Sociology</i>. This has been pursued in a period of change - in the context of the retirement of senior staff - by primarily investing in early career academics, which has expanded our international profile and supported key areas of research prioritisation. Half of our research staff joined us during this REF period and the profile of seniority to early career has been deliberately geared to sustainability. In REF2014, Chairs and Readers made up half our submission; in this submission the majority of colleagues are SLs, Lecturers and Fellows. As a result of our recruitment approach our current profile is more international (40% of our research staff compared with 25% REF 2014) and female (72% compared with 63% REF2014).</p> <p>We have over 50 research relationships with non-academic groups across the policy, practice, NGO, and civil society spheres. Regional relationships are a particular emphasis, in keeping with the University's Place and Engagement strategy. Longstanding research partnerships with the Newcastle Hospitals Foundation Trust are particularly important to our scope of influence and impact. At the same time, we have global reach through our collaborations with groups such as Plan International, and the International Rare Disease Research Consortium. Within the university we are important to initiatives shaping research strategy and EDI initiatives. Reflecting our longstanding work with the NHS, we are centrally involved in the approved NUCoRE (Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence) (<i>ILES 2.2.1</i>) for Rare Diseases, which is a collaboration with clinical researchers based at the Newcastle Hospitals Foundation Trust. We have been awarded two Newcastle University Academic Career Track (NUAcT) Fellows (highly competitive fellowships with five years of research time, research funding and a PhD studentship, followed by an open-ended lectureship (<i>ILES 3.2.4</i>)) - one of the very few Units across the University to receive two. We participate in Faculty initiatives enabling interdisciplinary collaboration across the social sciences and arts and humanities. We are particularly central to the work of the Institute of Social Sciences, leading on events and activities that progress interdisciplinary work with a strong social purpose. The University became a Gold supporter of the Campaign for Social Sciences in 2020 due to our advocacy. We also have a role in cross subject research groups, including Cultures of Memory, Medical Humanities, and Gender.</p> <p>Important University EDI initiatives (internally and externally directed) benefit from our expertise. Two colleagues (<i>Campbell</i> and <i>Verma</i>) led the development of a University BAME staff network</p>

in 2017, while another (*Scully*), previously chaired the University Disability Interest Group. *McAreavey* and *Shildrick* are members of the University Social Justice Advisory Group and helped organise the University Listening Campaign for the Real Living Wage (now implemented). *Blell* is participating in the implementation of the Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Culture Initiative (2020-).

### Research Strategy

The UoA went through a transition period following REF2014 to review our research thematic focus and revise our structures for providing research support, culture and direction, and to plan for the Unit's long-term sustainability. The process involved all staff and PGR students.

We:

- (1) Confirmed which existing research themes to retain as important and relevant to us, to School and University priorities, to funders and to areas of societal concern.
- (2) Identified research areas to expand to guide staff recruitment.
- (3) Agreed to maintain research clusters as a vehicle for expressing our research strengths externally and also as spaces for providing research support and culture within our group for both staff and PGRs.
- (4) Identified specific activities and support mechanisms to be led by research leadership roles, which sit alongside School, Faculty and University mechanisms.

Through this process we identified three distinct research clusters that encapsulate our shared research excellence and expertise, including that of PEALS as a Research Centre. Due to the involvement of all colleagues in shaping the clusters and the strategy of recruiting to each, all colleagues have a home within them. Staff and PGRs, including those in PEALS, selected which cluster they primarily identified with, but were also encouraged to join activities and see their research interests reflected in other clusters. Through the clusters we meet regularly to develop research topics and work and pursue collective activities such as workshops, seminars and joint writing and bid development.

### Research Clusters and PEALS

#### Identities, Embodiments and Selves

Reflecting the depth of our work in identities, sexualities and embodiment, as acknowledged by the REF panel in 2014, we have retained and updated this cluster. Projects funded by Leverhulme, NIHR, EU and Wellcome Trust are enabling research to explore: 1) How marginalised sexual identities emerge within and through contests over rights and citizenship, work which is both internationally recognised and located (*Casey, Richardson, Seely [new appointment], Sifaki [new appointment]*). Areas of work include post-trafficking in Nepal, sexuality politics in the Global South, and sexualities and nationalism in Greece. 2) How modes of embodiment and embodied relations are re-shaped by innovations in medicine (*Graham, McLaughlin, Rees [new appointment], Tarr [new appointment]*). Areas of work include: the relationship between patient experiences and identities and medical practices and innovations, health professional identities and organisational settings, innovative creative and participatory methodologies for studying chronic illness and different embodiments.

#### Power, Inequalities and Citizenship

This cluster was revised in 2014 (from social change and transformation) as a result of committing to research that engages with the social problems created by growing inequalities and injustice. Projects funded by ESRC are enabling research to explore: 1) Contemporary inequalities and the material factors that contribute to their continuity in areas such as education, childhood and intergenerational poverty, migration and rural life (*McAreavey [new appointment], Pasztor and Shildrick [new appointment]*). 2) Ethnicity and religious dynamics of recognition/mis-recognition and belonging/non-belonging as a citizen in the UK, Europe and the Middle East (*Dobbernack, Harries and Pasquetti [all new appointments]*). In 2019 the North East Child Poverty Commission (NECPC) moved after a competitive tender to the Unit and Cluster. The Commission brings together regional local authorities, the voluntary sector and Government

agencies to advocate for action to improve the lives of children growing up in poverty in the North East of England. It is funded by the Millfield House Foundation (2019-2022) and *Shildrick* is its academic lead.

#### Imagining Pasts and Futures

This cluster is a result of the 2014 internal review and reflects our unit's interdisciplinary strengths in social anthropology, science and technology studies and cultural studies. It examines constructions of pasts and futures contained in individual, collective and state imaginaries and practices. Projects funded by AHRC, Leverhulme and EPSRC are enabling research to explore: 1) How personhood emerges through the interaction of the everyday with broader narrative imaginaries and material possibilities, in contexts such as ageing, youth transition, and socio-political change (*Degnen, Gafijczuk, Gallinat, Winkler-Reid [new appointment]*). 2) Interdisciplinary examinations of past, present and future relationships to nature, in both fictional representations and in contestations over the climate emergency (*Garforth, Verma [new appointment]*). 3) Reinventions of societal institutions and spaces through new technologies and cultural movements in fields such as policing, smart cities and cultural industries (*Campbell, Hollands*).

#### Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Centre (PEALS)

PEALS, which was founded in 1999, has an international reputation for interdisciplinary research into and with the life sciences and for its contributions to responsible research and innovation. It collaborates with scientists, clinicians, patients and wider publics to sociologically and ethically evaluate the implications of developments in the life sciences. It first became known for its research on the impact of new reproductive and genomic technologies and new treatment and research approaches to rare diseases. This work has continued in this REF cycle through projects funded by Wellcome Trust and the EU on mitochondrial research egg providers, contests over the legitimate uses of reproductive technologies and involvement in scientific projects working on muscular dystrophy (*Haimes, McCormack [new appointment]*). These existing areas of interest have been expanded by funding from EPSRC, Wellcome, ESRC and MRC to look at newer areas of life science innovation, including synthetic biology and the management of patient data in international clinical research trials (*Blell [new appointment], Woods*).

#### **Impact Strategy**

Our impact and research strategies are by necessity closely connected: *we prioritise research that has policy, practitioner and social and cultural purpose geared towards tackling inequality, disadvantage, exclusion and social injustice*. This prioritisation is echoed in the School Impact Manifesto (2020), and the University's 2021 Vision of One University without Walls. Our fit with institutional strategy provides the infrastructural support, including access to funding, that sustains our impact commitment.

Three strategic foci encapsulate the overarching strategy, the ICSs submitted are examples of the ways in which we pursue and succeed in creating impact in these areas:

- **Impacts on creativity, culture and society.** Hollands' case study on the role of alternative night life and festivals in European cities exemplifies our commitment to supporting cultural initiatives, which look beyond commercial success to sustain societal solidarity and vitality.
- **Impacts on public policy, law and services.** McLaughlin's case study of working with disability and carer organisations to successfully advocate for local authorities to improve accessible public toilet provision exemplifies our commitment to working collaboratively with marginalised groups to improve public services.
- **Impacts on practitioners and delivery of professional services, enhanced performance or ethical practice.** Woods' and McCormack's case study from PEALS highlight's their long-term work with patient groups to shape the direction and approach of rare genetic diseases research exemplifies our commitment to use social science research as a tool for improving practitioner and policy making decision making.

**Open Research and Research Integrity**

We encourage the wide dissemination of both research outputs and data, while also containing distinctive expertise in the ethical challenges of open sharing. Colleagues are supported to develop data management plans for research proposals, including making use of the University's Research Data Repository. We are actively planning for Plan S. The Unit is fortunate to have a specialist in research integrity: Woods is University Convenor for Research Integrity and Ethics (2020-), UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) institutional representative, and University Research Ethics Committee Member (2018-), as well as having been the Deputy Chair (2016-2020) of the HaSS Faculty Ethics Committee. He is also a key figure within the NHS Health Research Authority (see Section 4).

**Research and Impact Strategy going forward**

Our strategy over the next five years is to: *sustain and develop a research environment that nurtures research of the highest quality, values diverse forms of excellence, has social impact locally and globally and which makes a substantial mark in both sociology and interdisciplinary exchanges.*

As part of this strategy we are currently reviewing two areas of possible research collaboration in areas of urgent social concern:

- The significance of stigma to the lives of people experiencing crime, disability, poverty and sexual exploitation (Casey, McLaughlin, Richardson, Shildrick).
- The long-term implications of Brexit and Covid-19 for the those located in marginalised communities (Degnen, Harries, McAreavey).

We have established a series of research and impact objectives and identified how we will implement them.

Objectives	Areas of Implementation (2021-2026)
Strengthen research expertise and activity in areas of inequality, disadvantage, exclusion and social injustice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase our involvement in interdisciplinary collaborative and rapid response calls.</li> <li>2) Appoint a Lecturer in Sociology of Crime who will develop work on stigma and inequality (post approved and advertised November 2020).</li> <li>3) Professorial appointment with significant experience of collaborative, interdisciplinary research income capture (post approved, advertised February 2021).</li> </ol>
Expand our partnerships with community, cultural, and public sector organisations at the regional, national and international levels to embed co-production and impact in the lifecycle of our research.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Use the presence of the NECPC to extend our policy and practice partnerships.</li> <li>2) Ensure colleagues take up impact training opportunities the university provides such as the Policy, Skills, Enterprise and Global Challenges Academies.</li> </ol>
Develop more internal and external collaborative approaches to impact development and activity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Map the current impact activities of colleagues to identify synergies and thematics to support.</li> <li>2) Create events, opportunities and dialogue with current and future impact collaborators.</li> </ol>

Objectives	Areas of Implementation (2021-2026)
Review the future direction and structure of PEALS in light of changes in life science innovation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Undertake an external review of PEALS to examine its research strategies and priorities.</li> <li>2) PEALS colleagues to continue to engage with NUCoREs, building on their leading involvement in the Rare Diseases NUCoRE.</li> </ol>
Continue to make a leading contribution to the research values and priorities articulated in the University's 2021 Vision.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Continue to be involved in NUCoRE developments such as proposals for ones in the areas of Children, Young People and Families, the Rural Economy, and Innovation and Work.</li> <li>2) Participate in university research initiatives such as the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise and the Institute of Social Science 2021 work on poverty.</li> </ol>

## 2. People

### People Profile

At the census date our unit comprised 25 (24.5FTE) T&R colleagues, alongside seven Research Associates and three T&S colleagues. During the REF period we have had six retirements (*Castro, Haimes, Outhwaite, Payne, Phillimore, Vail*) and five colleagues have left to take up positions elsewhere (*Lawler, Scully, Moreno Figueroa, Murtagh, Wessels*). Our expansion is a result of:

- a. Institutional investment in the subject area; including £658,000 in PEALS which led to the appointment of one Chair (*Murtagh*, who has since departed as part of a major investment in data science at Glasgow University, but is being replaced at Chair level), one Senior Lecturer (*McCormack*) and a fixed term research associate (*Wienroth*, now a Vice-Chancellor's Senior Fellow at Northumbria University), and the award of two NUAcT Fellows (*Blell* and *Seely*).
- b. Successful mentoring of early career researchers to win externally-funded fellowships (*Sifaki* and *Verma*).

Our staffing profile going forward provides vitality and sustainability via lectureship appointments and NUAcT Fellowships, as well as leadership via senior appointments and promotions.

### Recruitment Processes

EDI considerations shape recruitment processes, alongside research and impact priorities and ensuring innovative teaching provision. For all posts, applicants are asked to address how their work contributes to cluster/PEALS research expertise, as well as their approach to impact. Lectureship/SL level posts highlight specific areas of research focus (for example social inequalities and race and ethnicity have been the focus of the last three appointments). Reader/Chair posts have a strong focus on capacity for income generation and research leadership skills. Application information and language stresses our commitment to EDI and career progression. Recruitment committees for open contract posts across the REF period have all contained a mix of gender and career seniority. Short-listed candidates (we have had no all-male short lists) provide a presentation to all colleagues, including PGRs, and feedback is incorporated into the selection panel considerations. The NUAcT recruitment process includes a first phase short listing that is anonymised to avoid explicit and implicit bias.



We are actively committed to minimising short-term contracts and ensuring those on them (currently only Research Associates and Fellows) are provided with career development opportunities. Two colleagues on rolling one-year fixed-term teaching contracts were converted to open ended T&S contracts in 2018 and a third in 2020. Within our REF submission only *Verma* and *Sifaki*, who are funded by external fellowships, are fixed-term.

We have a number of colleagues linked to research project funding who are fully integrated into the subject area. During the REF period we have had 21 postdoctoral RAs in total; at the census date we had one Senior Research Associate (*Minion*), 6 research associates (*Baily*, *Holland*, *Machirori*, *Mulrine*, *Roberts*, *Wesser*, *Wilde*) and one University funded fixed term Research Excellence Academy Fellow (*Steggals*). Several RAs have been supported to move to career enhancing positions here or elsewhere. For example, *McCormack* has moved from being a fixed term SRA to an open contract SL. The University is one of the first of 31 organisations in the UK to become signatories of the new Researcher Development Concordat, launched in September 2019. We are contributing to the University's commitment to it by designing training on research ethics and research integrity within the new Skills Academy (*ILES 2.2.5*). The Director of Research ensures PI's fulfil their responsibilities within the concordat, for example, RAs have 10 days pro rata for career development outwith the projects to which they are attached.

### **Induction, Career Development and Promotions**

As part of induction, all new colleagues are provided with a mentor for their first two years (which coincides with the probationary period for all grades below Chair); they are also introduced to staff EDI networks they can join that relate to contexts such as gender, sexualities, disability, race and ethnicity, and caring responsibilities. New T&R colleagues, particularly ECRs, have reduced teaching and administrative roles for at least their first year. Each year our Head of Subject and Director of Research undertake Personal Research Plan (PRPs) meetings with each colleague (mandatory for T&R colleagues, but also offered to RAs and T&S). This meeting provides informal mentoring, focusing on strategic advice on research and impact plans and identifying areas for support. Everyone also undertakes an annual Performance Development Review (PDR), which is a broader and more formal exploration of activities, and – where relevant – probation is managed. All T&R colleagues are eligible for a semester of study leave after six semesters. Those who have carried senior administrative roles (Lead Degree Programme Director and Head of Subject) receive two semesters of leave. During the REF period we have had 18 periods of single semester leave and five periods of year-long sabbaticals amongst the colleagues submitted.

We support colleagues' research through a range of mechanisms, recently revised in light of ongoing EDI work. We have a transparent workload model for T&R and T&S colleagues, which is proactively used to allocate all research, teaching and administrative tasks. Colleagues undertaking substantial impact activities, including - but not only - those working on ICSs, are given additional hours in the workload model (200 hours in the final stages of REF preparation for ICS authors and 80 hours for people developing impact activity). Over the REF period the level of Individual Research Support Allowance allocated to all colleagues (including T&S posts and RAs) per year has grown: in 2019-20 it stood at £2,300, which was not pro-rated for part-time colleagues. The activities people can use these funds for has expanded. For example, it can be used to make conference and networking activity more feasible for people with caring responsibilities or disabilities, or for alternative research support such as training or equipment. The School has funded the development of an Early Career Network launched in 2015, an initiative led by a Sociology appointment (*Winkler-Reid*) for its first three years, which brings together self-defined early career T&R, T&S staff, contract researchers, and research fellows. Initiatives include promotions workshops and writing retreats. The University Returners Support Programme provides additional research support for people returning from parental leave, bereavement leave, or a career break due to caring responsibilities and has been used by two colleagues at different stages of their careers.

Women have been in the key roles of Head of Sociology and Director of Research/REF Coordinator for the whole REF period. Timing of research meetings, training events, and

seminars is primarily scheduled within core hours of 9:30am – 3pm. Some seminars and social activities do occur after 3pm in recognition that not all care responsibilities revolve around the school day, and due to feedback from early career colleagues that some evening social interaction is welcomed.

Promotion processes are overseen by the Head of School and Head of Subject. Senior staff provide one-to-one advice, including on draft applications. People Services provide briefings, and the Faculty introduced a mentoring scheme in 2018 for women applying to gain advice from senior female colleagues (including colleagues from our Unit). A series of promotions occurred during the REF period: (*McCormack* to SRA; *Wienroth* to SRA; *Pasquetti* and *Winkler-Reid* from Grade F to G, *Garforth* to SL; *Gallinat* and *McAreavey* to Reader and *Degen* and *Shildrick* to Chair). In addition, three promotions (*Harries* to SL, *Verma* to SRA and *Woods* to Chair) were awarded in 2020. We have a success rate of 82% on promotion applications across the REF period. Promotions are monitored through the EDI data available to us and do not indicate gendered barriers to progression; however we recognise the data does not capture all possible issues, or other protected characteristics within our staff profile.

Phased retirements are possible for colleagues, with the Head of Subject working with People Services and the colleague to identify the phasing approach appropriate to them – both in terms of timescale and the responsibilities to continue during the period. After retirement people can remain connected to us either through visiting positions (*Payne*, *Phillimore*, *Selman* and *Vail*) or Emeritus Professor status (*Castro*, *Haines* and *Outhwaite*).

### **PGR Colleagues**

PGR students are integral to our research community. We have been able to retain a strong community with 24 (no research-based professional doctorates) completing during the REF period, while 20 continuing and new PGR students are with us as the 2020/21 academic year begins, including three funded via the ESRC Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Partnership (NINE DTP) and one via AHRC Northern Bridge DTP. The NINE DTP (£14m 2017-2021), successor to the North East Doctoral Training Partnership (NEDTC), is our main source of UKRI PGR studentships. Since 2018 it also hosts a Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme. We are part of the Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work pathway, plus three further interdisciplinary Pathways: Child, Youth and Family, Health, Wellbeing and Society and Human Geography. Across NEDTC and NINE DTP we have won 20 studentships. We also participate in other UKRI postgraduate training partnerships, which attract PhD students and extend the interdisciplinarity reach of our work. We co-supervise within the EPSRC Digital Civics CDT located in Computer Science (three students). We also have a steady presence of international students, both self-funded and funded via University scholarships from a range of countries including China, Ghana, India, Italy and Iran.

PGRs all have a minimum of two supervisors, with ECRs matched with experienced supervisors. To be lead supervisor, a colleague must have supervised two PGRs to successful completion. A Learning Agreement is signed by new students and supervisors. All PGRs have a minimum of 10 formal supervisions each year, which are minuted on E-Portfolio. Annual Progress Review meetings monitor progress, held by two other colleagues from the subject area. We follow HaSS policy for managing changes in supervision appropriately and we have a close working relationship with the Graduate School to manage Interruption of Studies, changes in registration, and problems in supervisory relationships. A key role for the PGR Director is the development and maintenance of the PGR research community. Career building workshops, co-developed with PGRs, are run every year, looking at topics such as: giving your first conference presentation, publishing and peer review, careers outside academia and fellowship funding possibilities.

Postgraduate research training is primarily organised via the HaSS Postgraduate Training Programme. Our colleague *Tarr* is Degree Programme Director for the HaSS Postgraduate Certificate in Research Training, which provides a formal teaching qualification to PGR students. Several colleagues also teach in the programme. We provide specialist ethics training, alongside

sessions on ethnographic research and quantitative and qualitative analysis. Colleagues have worked with Durham University Anthropologists since 2005 to run an intensive interdisciplinary workshop Writing Across Boundaries for post-fieldwork PGRs, which improves participants' skills in analysing and writing up ethnographic data for publication. *Degen* now co-leads the programme, which is open to PGRs from across the UK and internationally. PGRs also have access to training through the various Academies at the University.

PGRs run their own workshops enhancing their research skills and building their research networks. PGRs collaborated with visiting Greek PGRs students to run a workshop on Migration, Ethics and Research Methods in 2019 to explore the challenges of undertaking research in this complex area of key social concern in both countries. To increase the visibility of their work and employment options within a competitive job market, PGRs are strongly encouraged to participate in external workshops, conferences and professional associations. The School provides conference funds to self-funded PGR students, as well as hardship funds up to £1,000 per student in any calendar year. PGRs are encouraged and supported to pursue publication activities, including co-authoring with supervisors. Papers published include in the *Journal of Rural Studies* and *BMC Women's Health*. Gaining publication experience and building networks is also encouraged through writing book chapters, conference proceedings and public facing opportunities such as blogs and pieces in *Conversation* and *Discover Society*. PGRs have also developed their own [blog site](#). During both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matters protests, it became an important vehicle for intervening in vital societal debates.

#### Post Completion Destinations

Our PGRs have gone on to a range of academic posts. Five are in lectureship positions at: the University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Ghana; Liverpool Hope (x two); Oxford; and Newcastle; and three are SLs at Portsmouth, Northumbria and University of East London. One was awarded an ESRC Post-Doctoral Fellowship in 19/20 at Durham University, while another will re-join us in January 2021 through that scheme.

#### **Responding to Covid-19 impacts**

People's research activities have been affected by the physical limitations created by government restrictions, as well as the significant work involved in the shift to teaching and assessing online and working from home while managing caring responsibilities, particularly home schooling. A number of practical initiatives have been implemented to support colleagues with these challenges. In April central University funds were released to enable three-month extensions for fixed term contract colleagues whose contracts were due to end before 31<sup>st</sup> of July, benefiting two RAs in Sociology. Locally we have also used FEC funds and other income channels to extend contracts. After emergency funding by UKRI, both final year NINE DTP PGRs and UKRI grants in their final year were provided with three month costed extensions. The process is now underway to look at similar support for PGRs and projects in earlier stages. A productive Planning Day in July 2020 allowed us collectively to agree a programme of research support, including an online external seminar programme and online research dialogues for people to present developing writing and proposal activities. All these activities are open to PGRs. During much of the period, PGR supervisors have met with students fortnightly online and the PGR Director has had a weekly online get together with students, which has been an opportunity to share news on university initiatives and foster social interaction.

#### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Our School was one of the first in HaSS to be awarded Athena Swan Bronze in October 2017. Throughout we have committed to this as a process that goes beyond gender to all protected characteristics and that it should be about more than numbers, but rather an ongoing process of cultural change. One legacy was the setting up of the School EDI Committee. The committee monitors progress on the objectives laid out in the Swan application, including ensuring diversity in leadership/recruitment and identifying and taking forward immediate priorities. The School has an annual EDI day (the most recent reviewing University and School Dignity and Respect procedures) and the EDI Committee Chair sits on all School committees to ensure EDI factors are considered in all decisions. Since March the EDI Committee has been monitoring EDI



implications of Covid-19 and is engaging with HaSS and the University Executive responses. EDI training has been undertaken by all colleagues, with extra training provided for people involved in selection panels and REF processes. An annual EDI staff survey is undertaken, examining different priority areas that agenda set the EDI Committee for the subsequent year. The current Chair is from Sociology (*Close*, a T&S colleague), as are four Committee members selected for their research expertise in EDI issues, one of whom is also the Unit's EDI lead.

Developing the REF submission included important EDI considerations. To guard against unconscious bias in the topics or authors of papers submitted, each piece was internally and externally reviewed by four people. At all stages the selection process was transparent and decisions communicated to colleagues. We have, where data allows, monitored selected publications against the profile of our colleagues. The gender profile of our group guards against gender bias; while there is a smaller percentage of submissions coming from Lecturers and Fellows on fixed term contracts, these categories also overlap with those early in their career with fewer pieces in the public domain by the census date.

	Presence in Submission	Presence in outputs in submission
Female colleagues	72%	83%
Reader and above	36%	57%
Senior Lecturer and below	64%	43%
Staff on fixed term contracts	8%	3%

The environment statement was shared with all colleagues at a research away day (and before final submission) with time given to extensive group discussion.

#### Future EDI priorities

72% of the UoA are female, including the majority of Chair and leadership roles, but we are a predominantly white (86%), non-disabled group of colleagues. Given the prominence of equality issues in our research, including in the fields of race and ethnicity and disability, this is something we need proactively to respond to. Our EDI strategy commits us to review and improve our recruitment processes and documentation and to expand the networks we use to reach people. We need to continue to work on EDI University initiatives, including the newly launched Inclusive Newcastle Knowledge Centre, and the work of the HaSS Faculty Dean of Diversity and the University Dean of Equality.

### **3. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

#### **Research income**

In this REF period, Sociology has been awarded £3.26 million research income across 36 awards, representing a 49% increase from the last REF (£2.18 million REF 2014). The total research grant spend sits at £3.47 million - 35% of that coming from RCUK - making us the 4<sup>th</sup> (out of 15) most successful UoA in HaSS on this indicator. Our continued success in achieving grant income underpins the depth and quality of much of our submitted outputs (24 of 54), while recognising the quality and value of scholarship produced independently of external funding. Our continued award success has been made possible by the strategic approaches we have taken to recruitment and the interdisciplinarity strengths in the Unit. While remaining successful with existing funders (the ESRC, Wellcome Trust, the EU and Leverhulme), we have increased our success with the AHRC (last REF the award level was £20,796, this time it is £1,048,561). We are particularly pleased to have maintained an above average success rate (41%) with UKRI. Our PI/CI density amongst colleagues is strong due to the quality and research interests of our new appointments - of our 13 appointments, 11 have generated external research income – and the supportive environment we have created that enables them to succeed.

Our interdisciplinary strength has enabled us to increase our award success with the EPSRC (REF2014 £150,557, this REF £217,693) and MRC (last REF £25,404, this REF £132,067). *Degnen's* Co-I role in the Creative Fuse North East AHRC project is an excellent example involving collaboration across five North East universities, researchers from across digital sciences, design, social sciences, and arts and humanities and creative industries with the aim of boosting innovation and creating jobs in the region. A key benefit to such interdisciplinary collaborations is the direct opportunities they generate for societal benefit. For example, *Woods* provides the responsible innovation (RI) work package to the EPSRC project: Synthetic Portabolomics (2016-2022), an interdisciplinary project that crosses all Newcastle Faculties, involving computing science, cell and molecular biosciences and bioethics, as well as partners at other universities and life science and data science companies. *Woods'* role is to develop standards for RI within the project and the broader synthetic biology research landscape. He has developed systems for managing RI, educated early career scientists in its importance and shared his expertise in regulatory structures in this emerging field with the Parliamentary Office of Science and technology (POST) and the Head of Agriculture and Technology at UK Trade and Agriculture.

We have grown in research capacity thanks to University investment (£1.5m in total), this has occurred because of the close synergy of our research priorities and strategies with the University. Investment includes:

- £658,000 granted to PEALS (see *Section 2*) due to the Centre's strong overlap with the University's prioritisation of the life sciences in its research strategy.
- £154,000 from the University's Research Excellence Academy (2014-2019) for a postdoctoral Fellowship (*Steggals*) and a PhD studentship (awarded to *Pasquetti*).
- Appointment of two highly competitive NUAAct Fellows (*Blell* and *Seely*).
- £44,865 to support hosting conferences.
- £29,162 from central Social Justice Funds, which has supported partnership projects in the region.

HaSS also provide pump-priming funds for research and impact activity. The Bid Preparation Fund offers up to £10k to support funding applications and has helped the unit to develop six external research funding applications. The Faculty Research Fund offers up to £4K to support new research projects and publication costs. HaSS supports impact activity via the ESRC Impact Accelerator Account and internal funds: £102,458 has been won from these sources and has been particularly significant to the development of *McLaughlin's* ICS. We have also successfully bid for funds from Faculty Institutes: in total we have received £25,000 from the Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal (now the Institute for Social Sciences) and the Newcastle University Institute for Creative Practice.

Looking ahead 11 funded projects will continue or begin post July 2020, with projected spend associated with them for the next REF of approximately £500,000. Notable new grants include an ESRC Post-Doctoral Fellowship (*Cummings*, *The Self-Understandings and Everyday Lives of Gay Men in Hainan*, 2021-2022) and *Degnen's* UKRI Covid-19 Rapid Response funding to examine Identity, Inequality, and the Media in Brexit-COVID-19-Britain (2020-2021). At the census date, 14 applications were submitted, including six to UKRI, with a total application value of £1,608,497.

### **Infrastructure for Enabling Research and Pursuing Impact**

Our capacity to pursue research and impact activity is enhanced by resources and support structures at the Unit, School, HaSS and central university levels.

#### Subject Area

Sociology's Director of Research works with the Head of Sociology, Sociology Impact Champion, Research Cluster Leads and our PGR Director to monitor our work against research objectives and respond to research opportunities. Impact development is led by the Subject Area Impact Champion who ensures impact resources are appropriately allocated to match our

impact strategy, provides training and development opportunities, mentors early career researchers, maps and facilitates impact pathways emerging across the work of colleagues and attends Faculty Impact meetings. Impact is integrated into our research support mechanisms, including annual research away day and sociology research committee meetings.

PEALS has its own administrative support and physical space in Sociology and develops its research culture and strategic development via a management group, an external advisory group, annual planning cycles, regular research activity such as informal reading groups, and mentoring of research associates who are integrated into the running of the centre. PEALS FEC and other overhead and consultancy income is retained to support its strategic development and responsibilities under the Research Concordat.

#### School

The School benefits from a full-time professional services research support team of 5FTE: Research Manager, Research Officer, pre-award grant officer, and two post-award grant officers. PEALS is also supported by a Research Centre Manager (0.5FTE) and administrator (0.5FTE). The team provides information on grant opportunities across different funding bodies, grant costings, specialist advice (including an EU Section), contracts and negotiations, impact statement mentoring, administer award spends, and co-ordinate research-related events and visitors. The School's Research Committee develops and implements the School's research strategy, fund research, and support and monitor research activity.

The School maintains a research income policy to enable PIs to receive funds directly from their grants to support their research activity. 70% of directly allocated Investigator (DA) salary is returned to the individual's research account, since 2013-14 in Sociology this has enabled full or partial teaching relief for either one semester or a full year for eight colleagues. The unit further supports time for research by using part of its own 15% top slice of DA investigator time to part-fund replacement lecturer costs and the additional costs of more experienced research staff for grant awards, to provide additional support for PIs to deliver on project requirements. The School provides dedicated impact funds to the subject area (£15,000 per year 14/15-17/18, £18,000 per year 18/19-19/20). These funds have been used to both support ICS activity and to enhance impact development work in the Unit.

#### HaSS/University

HaSS and university research support structures are crucial to our capacity to obtain research income and fulfil the goals of our projects. HaSS R&I team has two Research Funding Development Managers, two Business Development Managers, three Impact Support Officers, one Research Manager and one Research and Projects Officer, as well as clerical support. The HaSS Grants and Contracts Team aids the financial and legal aspects of grant management. The Unit also benefits from University-wide research services such as the Research Data Service, IT services (for example, a three-year rolling programme of computer upgrades; IT support has been central to our continued capacity to function during the peak of Covid-19 disruption), Library Provision (including specialist archive access, open access funds and the supply of e-books, which has been particularly important during the pandemic disruption), the Engagement Team, the Press Office and People Services. The University's ePrints repository ensures research outputs are made Green Open Access, while School and Faculty funds support Gold Open Access. 15 articles have been made Gold Open Access via these funds.

#### **Facilities**

Sociology will move into a new estates space in summer 2021. The £58m refurbishment of the Henry Daysh Building will co-locate the Unit with social scientists from across the Faculty, and will help foster cross pollination of ideas. It will provide high quality single occupation offices for T&R and T&S colleagues, an open plan School PGR space, new seminar rooms, social spaces for staff/student/public interactions, high-end computing suite, and video-conferencing facilities. EDI considerations have been built into the development of the Daysh refurbishment. Of particular importance was the commitment to respond to longstanding accessibility issues. All floors will be accessible to wheelchair users; the building also hosts one of the three Changing

Places Toilets on campus, as well as increasing inclusive toilet facilities for transgender students and staff, baby changing facilities and 'well-being rooms' where women can express milk or breastfeed on return from maternity leave, and colleagues can pray.

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

Guided by the School Impact Manifesto, collaboration and partnership is at the heart of our strategies and activities. It informs the research we do, how we do it and how it can make a difference to the broad range of users - whether academics or publics - of our work.

##### Collaboration and Contributions to Society

It is through collaboration that we purposively contribute to:

- 1) **Informing policy and practice.** This sits at the heart of PEALS research. *Haines'* Wellcome Trust project (2013-2016) examined the experiences of women who volunteer to provide eggs for mitochondrial research for payment. It was a partnership with Newcastle University's Wellcome Trust Centre for Mitochondrial Research and the Newcastle Fertility Centre and has influenced the regulatory framework for this new area of genomic medicine in the UK. Since 2009 *Woods* has been an appointed member of the Ethics Advisors' Panel of the NHS Health Research Authority, now in his 3<sup>rd</sup> term. PEALS colleagues work closely with the Nuffield Council on Bioethics (NcOB), a national independent body, which informs policy and public debate about the ethical questions raised by biological and medical research. *Haines* was a member of its Council (2013-2019), while *Scully* was a member of its Working Group on Ethics of Genome Editing and Human Reproduction (2017-2018).

Policy change is the key goal of the North East Child Poverty Commission. Currently it is responding to the risk that Covid-19 will increase child poverty in the North East and elsewhere. For example, it made a submission to Government ahead of the 2020 Spending Review and is regularly engaging with the region's MPs. *Graham's* participation in NIHR projects has led to outputs directed to policy change in healthcare and practitioner journals such as the *NIHR Health Technology Assessment Journal*. Her research on pregnancy loss is also included in a REF Impact Case Study being submitted to UoA3 from Newcastle. *Richardson's* ESRC Sexualities Equalities project (2007-2010) has continued to feed into policy in the UK and in the EU during this REF period. Its research methodology was adapted for a major policy survey of public officials in 19 countries by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, in order to better understand and enforce EU equalities legislation. With Surya Monro (Huddersfield University), Richardson was contracted to produce an overview report of the country studies for the Centre for European Policy Studies. This Report was launched at the European Parliament in May 2016.

- 2) **Research partnerships with marginalised groups that enable their perspectives and expertise to be shared with decision makers and other powerful groups.** Due to the prominence of marginalised groups in the research we undertake we bring their perspectives into dialogue with others. In 2018 *Shildrick* was part of Newcastle University's written submission to the high-profile UK visit of Philip Alston, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. As a result, Newcastle was one of the few universities he visited. *Degen and Pasquetti* are working with the West End Refugee Service (WERS) to mobilise awareness of its role in social justice possibilities in Newcastle. As part of this they have connected WERS to the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. This work is feeding into the University's goal of becoming a University of Sanctuary. *Richardson's* ESRC project on Post-Trafficking in Nepal (2009-2012) has continued to support research capacity building in Shakti, the Nepalis anti-trafficking organisation who were research partners in the project. Shakti developed their own research pilot project (2014-15) and report, Life After Moving to Legal Process: Social Impact on Women in Post Trafficking Situations (2016), as well as co-authoring a



paper in Development in Practice (2015). The Trafficking research findings were also cited in the World Bank report Violence against Women. Lessons from South Asia (2015). *Winkler-Reid's* Girl-Kind project (2017-), funded by ESRC Impact Accelerator funding, has worked with over 300 girls and 13 schools across the North East to challenge narratives about their lives and celebrate their capacity to identify solutions. The virtual launch of the project's report Hearing Girls' Voices (2020) was attended by people in senior positions across the region in private, public, education and charity sectors.

- 3) **Provide research tools to non-governmental organisations.** Colleagues use their research skills to work with organisations on their strategic planning. *Degen* worked with Tyneside Cinema on their Dementia Friendly Programme. *McAreavey* works with Riverside Community Health Project to co-produce their communication strategy and The People's Kitchen to shape their Strategic Priorities. *McLaughlin* is working with the Great North Children's Hospital to develop comic-based information materials for children receiving medical treatment such as MRI scans. *Verma* is working with Not Coul (a UK community group) and Save Coul Links Conservation Coalition (coalition of UK environmental organisations) to support work challenging planning applications in environmentally sensitive locations. *Winkler-Reid* is a member of Plan International's Academic Advisory Board for the State of Girls Rights 2019 Report.

#### PGR Contributions

PGR students are encouraged to pursue engagement and impact. *McVittie* undertook a DTP Nine Policy Placement with the Oswin Project in 2019, a Northumberland Charity for Ex-Offenders. He produced the New Beginnings at the Oswin Project Report and is now a Trustee. *Darling* used her NINE DTP Policy Placement in 2018 to work with Culture Bridge, a North East arts organisation who support arts projects in schools. PhD graduates have taken up important policy and practice positions, for example CEO of Disability North (*Armstrong*) and Senior Land Policy Advisor for the international gender and development NGO, LANDESA (*Uvuza*).

#### **Collaborations and Contributions to the Research Base**

Three of the Unit's major grants involve international collaboration, and six involve national collaborations. In several cases the collaborations also involve commercial and public sector partners. *Woods'* (CI) Synthetic Portabolomics project (2016-2022) is a partnership between multiple UK and European Universities and digital and genomics companies, including CERN Switzerland, Microsoft UK and Ingenza UK. *Gallinat's* Knowing the Secret Police AHRC project (2018-2021) includes partnerships with BStU Stasi Archive in Berlin, the BpB Federal Agency for Civic Education and the Roncalli-Haus Magdeburg: an education centre of the Catholic Church.

Sociology colleagues are involved in a number of international research networks that advance academic knowledge and applied activity. Several colleagues were involved in the Network on Ethics of Families, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO, 2014-2017). The network produced a key edited collection What About the Family? Practices of Responsibility in Care (2019, Oxford University Press). *McAreavey* is part of an international research network for rural research (TARRN). *Rees* is part of international network funded by a Canadian SSHRC Connections Grant (2019 – 2021): Inaccessible Care: An international forum on sexual assault services in rural Canada and Scotland.

Research collaborations are enhanced by external Visiting Fellows we host and by colleagues visiting other universities in the UK and overseas. This supports our visibility in academic debates and provides opportunities for knowledge exchange. One important benefit of the presence of visiting scholars in the Unit is the input they provide to research culture, in particular providing mentoring to ECRs, including PGRs, and linking us to their external networks from their host universities and countries. External funding, University and School funding support these activities, and we approach them in a flexible way to enable people with caring responsibilities to attend. For example, people can come for multiple brief visits, rather than one long term stay.

- Visitors to the UoA:
  - 9 overseas visitors from Europe and Australasia, including one funded by the Leverhulme Trust (*Vartabadien*, 2013-2015).
  - 3 Visiting posts for UK colleagues, including Professor *Sue Scott*, who has been actively contributing to our research culture since May 2019 and a long-term visiting post for *John Viet-Wilson* until his death in 2020.
  - Visits from Middle-East colleagues linked to *Phillimore's* RESCAP-MED project in 2014.
- 3 Visiting positions at UK Universities (*Haimes*, Cambridge University, 2013-; *Harries*, Manchester University, 2019-; *Shildrick*, Visiting Chair, Leicester University, 2017-)
- 8 Visiting Positions overseas, including 3 funded competitively awarded positions (*Pasquetti*, Princeton University 2017-2018; *Richardson*, Columbia University, 2015; *Winkler-Reid*, Bergen University 2019).

All colleagues are committed to supporting external collegiate activities that enhance intellectual debate and ensure sustainable high quality peer review processes.

- 1) **Organisation of high-profile academic conferences and workshops.** 47 events or special sessions at conferences have been organised by colleagues, 15 of which were in Newcastle. In March 2017 we hosted an international conference on Citizenship in an Era of Fragility. Speakers included the then President of the American Sociological Association (*Michelle Lamont*). Our PGR students were closely involved, presenting their work and shaping the conference's focus. PEALS run an annual symposium which brings leading ethicists, sociologists and clinical researchers and practitioners together to debate critical issues in the life sciences. A small sample of the conferences we have hosted include: 2016 Youth Matters Conference co-organised by *Winkler-Reid*; the Merit or Meritocracy Symposium in 2018 organised by *Gallinat*, *Payne*, *Garforth* and *Graham*; the Police Custody Nursing: Ethical, Social, Policy and Professional Challenges Workshop 2016 organised by *Rees*; the Visual Insights Conference in 2014 organised by *Campbell*. Colleagues are involved in leading international conferences, such as: *Shildrick* co-organised the Journal of Youth Studies Conference in Australia in 2019; *McAreavey* is heavily involved in the European Society for Rural Sociology biennial conferences (2019 and 2022); *McLaughlin* is one of the organisers of the Annual British Sociological Association Conference; *Scott* led the organisation of the European Sociological Conference in 2019. *Phillimore's* European Commission funded RESCAP-MED involved important Research Symposia in the Middle East; in 2014 he organised the Socio-Political Challenges in the Mediterranean Region: Implications for Non-Communicable Disease Prevent and Control Conference in Beirut, Lebanon.
- 2) **Editorial roles in leading academic journals:** *Shildrick* is Co-Editor in Chief of the Journal of Youth Studies (2017-). *Woods* was an editor of BMC Medical Ethics (2013-18). *McLaughlin* is Co-Editor (2017-2021) of the Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research. *McAreavey* is Co-Editor of Sociological Ruralis (2020-). *Graham* is Co-editor in Chief (2019 -) and *Rees* a Co-Editor of Social Theory and Health (2020-). Other colleagues sit on 14 editorial boards including Sociology (*Harries*), Ethnography (*Hollands*), Ageing & Society (*Degnen*), British Journal of Education (*Pasztor*), and British Journal of Criminology (*Campbell*). Three colleagues are also Book Series Editors: *Shildrick* (Routledge's Youth and Young Adulthood Series), *Richardson* (Palgrave Macmillan's Gender and Sexualities in the Social Sciences) and *Sifaki* (Routledge's Teaching with Gender Series).
- 3) **Editorial roles in special issues for journals:** 10 special issues were led or co-led by colleagues in this REF period, with almost all involving collaboration with international colleagues. Journals include: Journal of Youth Studies, International Society, City, the Sociological Review Monograph, the Journal of Rural Studies and Journal of Teaching in the Social Sciences.

- 4) **Leadership roles in disciplinary associations.** Colleagues are members of over 27 professional associations. *McLaughlin* is an elected member of the BSA Board of Trustees (2016-2021), and *Seddon* (2018-2020) was a PGR Forum convenor. Other professional association memberships include: the Royal Anthropological Institute's Publication Committee (*Degnen*), the Executive Committee of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (*Degnen*), the International Girls Studies Association (*Winkler-Reid*), the Utopian Studies Society (*Garforth*), the AtGender European network (*Sifaki*) and the European Society for Rural Sociology (*McAreavey*).
- 5) **Research proposal peer review activity** for key research funders (21 in total), including membership of the ESRC peer review college (12 colleagues) and formal roles for funders such as: EU Innovative Medicines Initiative Assessment, Carnegie Trust, Swedish Research Council, the Marie Skodowska Curie Fellowships and the Wellcome Trust.

The range of awards colleagues have been given and external roles undertaken speak to the external esteem their contributions to sociology and associated disciplines are held in.

- A number of PGRs have been recognised for research excellence and innovation. *Nicholls* was short listed for the BSA Philip Abrams Memorial Prize. *Palladino* produced a short documentary as part of her PhD on the experiences of older Italian migrants in the North East, which has been shown and been given honourable mentions at film festivals across Europe, including the 2019 Mediterranean Film Festival.
- Colleagues have given 164 keynotes.
- *Richardson* was awarded the 2018 SAGE Prize for Innovation and Excellence, which is given to the paper judged to be the most innovative and exceptional from all published by Sociology during the previous year.
- *Shildrick* was awarded Sociological Review's best paper of the year in 2014.
- *Harries'* monograph was nominated for the BSA Philip Abrahams Prize in 2018.
- In this period five colleagues were made Fellows of the Academy of Social Sciences (*Haimes*, *Hollands*, *McLaughlin*, *Richardson* and *Scully*).
- *Haimes* was awarded an OBE in 2017 for services to social sciences.

The broad range of collaborations we have built, particularly with the users of our research, are the bedrock for our research ambitions for the future. Through these collaborations, the new colleagues we have appointed, the strategic vision that underpins all our decisions and activities, and the institutional infrastructures that sustain us, we will develop much needed and innovative research that responds to the growing number of sociological challenges around us.