

<b>Institution:</b> Solent University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 20 (Social work & Social Policy)
<p><b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p><b>Overview</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unit of Assessment (UoA) 20 at Solent University brings together research and researchers from two main areas - the Work, Inequalities and the Lifecourse (WIL) research group, and the Warsash Maritime School (WMS). In addition, it draws on research from across many other areas of the University, including Health and Social Care; Computing and Networks; Education and Sociology; Business, Finance and Accountancy; Marketing, Journalism and Communications; Architecture, Design and The Built Environment; Psychology; and Engineering.</li> <li>2. The <a href="#">WIL research group</a> provides a space for new conversations and collaborations to develop through seminars, sharing of resources through workshops, mailing lists, and online discussions. Conceptually, WIL is interested in work in a broad sense - labours both paid and unpaid, and how these fit together and change over the life-course. At the organisational and macro levels, the group is concerned with workplace and managerial practice, shifting labour markets and skillset demands, and how inequalities are embedded within these and how they can be challenged and countered in policy terms. These concerns tap into some of the most pressing demands of our time that affect our daily lives, including worker wellbeing, the growing use of zero-hours contracts and the gig economy, shifting workforce demographics, how technology affects jobs, and the widening gap around work-based disadvantage.</li> <li>3. The <a href="#">Warsash Maritime School</a> (until July 2020 called the Warsash School of Maritime Science and Engineering) was established in 2015 from Solent's Engineering and Sciences departments and the Warsash Maritime Academy. Because of its association of over 120 years with education and training in the maritime sector and with shipping, ports and seafarers' life and work, the maritime area has traditionally been a key research strength at Solent. The worldwide trade of goods at the scale and ease of today is only possible because of the global maritime industry. The sector is a unique platform for international collaborative research that can deliver global benefit to society and the environment. Our goal is to pursue and build world-leading science and engineering research for a safe and sustainable maritime future. Research at Solent directly impacts the practice and behaviour of maritime businesses, industries and government agencies to reduce global environmental impact and deliver a safe and sustainable maritime sector. This includes investigating novel and innovative solutions to the challenges of changing technologies and work practices in the maritime industry, such as the implications of autonomous vessels and their interactions with human crews. Research creates solutions for a cleaner, safer and more efficient industry and workplaces, by investigating alternative propulsion and fuelling technologies. This research contributes to efforts to improve global maritime safety standards and understand complex employment relationships and the impacts of changing employment models on seafarers and seafaring.</li> <li>4. UoA20 is a new Unit for Solent and resonates closely with the University's fundamental qualities. As a Higher Educational Institute, Solent focuses on key social policy matters, such as widening participation, social justice and supporting social mobility, to bring about societal change. As the University continues to mature as a Higher Education Institute, we have been able to crystallise our contributions from different subject areas and build UoA20. This has involved academics at all stages of their research careers, including Grisoni, Wadsworth, Farquhar, Velija, Burnell and Wright at the more</li> </ol>

experienced end, and Baum-Talmor, Wang, Pyakurel, Devereux, Kantamaneni, Sobnath and Miranda towards the Early Career Researcher (ECR) end.

5. The UoA exemplifies the University's success in delivering its commitment and strength through cross-disciplinary collaboration and working in partnership with key stakeholders. For example, the [Gender, Empowerment and Multicultural Crews Project](#) spanned the disciplines of maritime studies, law, gender studies and health/wellbeing to explore seafarers' welfare, highlighting issues and identifying solutions that have been driven into practice through partnerships with unions and shipping companies. This work was shortlisted in 2017 for the Times Higher Education Awards in Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.
6. As a new UoA, our research profile is young but, guided by the principles of cross-disciplinary research and strong external partnerships, we have a clear sense of direction. The UoA has 20 staff, a number which has grown with the recent appointments of six early career researchers which shows our commitment to bringing through new researchers, informed by the University's strategic undertaking towards ECR development (see paragraph 20 of the institutional level environment statement).

### Present Strategy

7. Building on the University's strategy 2015-2020 (see paragraph 14 of the institutional level environment statement), UoA20 took the following research and impact approach.

- i. Establishment of a UoA Coordinator

As the UoA comprises groups from across the university, a UoA Coordinator was established to lead research and innovation moving forwards. This Coordinator regularly met with the Heads of Research from all Schools and in particular, researchers from WIL and WMS. They convened regular UoA research meetings to facilitate cross-disciplinary sharing of ideas and external partnerships to address real-world issues.

- ii. Supporting high-quality research

The UoA was established as part of the University's drive to increase its research quality and relevance. To this end, the main focus has been on ensuring that staff have the time and space to concentrate on research and subsequent publications. This has involved providing writing support and internal peer review, both within and beyond UoA20. This approach has delivered with staff identifying 89 outputs for review, from which 44 were selected for submission in REF2021. These include publications in journals such as *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, and *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, and as such are testimony of progress and trajectory as we begin to publish in academic journals of the highest reputation.

- iii. Staff development

We have put a range of measures in place to support the development both of early career researchers and of more established academic staff. These are detailed in Section 2 below and include:

- identification of the most research-active staff who have been given an increased time allocation for research
- biannual one-to-one research meetings with the UoA Lead to plan, review and allocate support
- an enhanced training package which uses the university's central research development programme (see paragraph 26 of the institutional level environment statement) and supplements it with UoA-focussed training; and
- prioritised access to institutional funding to support conference attendance and network-building

The strategy also included a mentoring programme to partner less experienced researchers with more experienced researchers. The successful outcomes of these mentoring arrangements are evidenced through staff publications, joint authorship of articles, speaking invitations to national and international conferences, and increases in teams submitting proposals for externally funded research initiatives. The research environment has been further strengthened through the establishment of an ongoing monthly research seminar series.

iv. Support from the Research Office

Under Solent's corporate research and innovation strategy, the central Research Office had its capacity and capability enhanced in research performance, research integrity and funding support. This support is available across the University. As a result of the size and international collaborative nature of recent bids within the Unit, UoA20 has proactively engaged with support from the Research Office in relation to bidding as an area development. (see paragraphs 22 and 27 of the institutional level environment statement). This has enabled delivery on the corporate objective of increasing cross-disciplinary research. This underpinning support has facilitated and enabled the UoA level strategies outlined above in relation to staff development, the generation of high-quality outputs and applications for external funding. Again, this approach has started to bear fruit, for example, with the successful award to Wright, in collaboration with partners from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, of the [Implementation of Ship Hybridisation Project](#).

v. Improving grant income

To improve its ability to conduct high-quality research, the UoA has sought to win more external funding. This was further developed by the Strategic Lead for research, who supported staff through the biannual research planning meetings referred to earlier, which included the development of funding applications. Where appropriate, the UoA Lead assigned an academic "funding mentor", experienced in writing and reviewing bids, and sought dedicated support from the Research Office to help develop and review the proposal prior to submission. The UoA approach has led to an increase in the number of successful bids from four in 2015/2016 to 14 in 2018/2019.

vi. Delivering real-world impact

As stated above, the UoA's guiding principles are to deliver cross-disciplinary research with real-world impact. The UoA20 approach to impact is that ideas must be driven into practice using a collaborative approach that extends beyond academia from the outset of the research. The key to this is strong relationships with stakeholders who "own" a problem or are well-placed to act on challenges. The UoA supports relationship-building by helping staff identify and approach the most appropriate partners, providing funding for travel/hosting meetings, and giving staff an enhanced time allocation for joint work with partners to deliver impact. Through research meetings and one-to-one planning, the UoA is also encouraging the sharing of relationships and wider impact opportunities across the UoA (and the University more widely). An example of this approach's success is the recent [Seafarers' Welfare in Chinese Ports Project](#) by Zhang, which led to changes in national legislation and company policy to improve protections for those working in the sector.

### Future Strategy

8. Having successfully built a portfolio of outputs, impact, income and doctoral student recruitment to support a submission in UoA 20 for the first time, there is a high level of optimism among research staff in growing research work in the area of Social Policy. The

plan is to ensure that we improve the quality and volume of research and develop a pipeline of funds and research-active staff to give this UoA longevity.

9. The University has recently published its 2020-2025 strategy with Research & Knowledge Exchange at its centre (see paragraphs 15 and 16 of the institutional level environment statement). It has a newly appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange to lead research at the institutional level and a senior academic to lead UoA20 appointed in Nov 2020, to complement and support the work of the existing strategic research and knowledge exchange leadership at the Faculty and School levels. To grow PGR in UoA20 five doctoral bursaries, one for each year between 2022/23 and 2026/27 have been approved by the University's Executive Board.
10. In summary, we will build on our successes in UoA20 by focusing on areas that we have made some good progress in and also developing research in areas such as, Environment and Engineering and Healthcare. We have had funding and output successes in these areas, including Wright's projects on the Implementation of Ship Hybridisation (see above) and [Ports Energy and Carbon Savings](#), funded through the EU. Investment and structural appointments, including UoA Leads, are being made to support this growth. Our strategy for the next five years will be focused on building towards the next REF submission, and we will adapt our strategy to reflect all that we learn from the current cycle of REF2021.

## 2. People

11. Solent University's corporate strategy is to invest in and support disciplines with world leading and internationally excellent outputs and impacts in research. Within UoA 20, the focus is on improving individual and community wellbeing through practice, provision, and policy, and the principles of inclusivity, equality and diversity lie at its heart. The UoA has key strands on gender and wellbeing and these research themes are fundamental to the UoA's approach to its staff. Within the UoA, we work hard to ensure that all staff are enabled to do their best and that they are recognised for their excellent work.

### Staffing strategy

#### *Recruitment*

12. Our recruitment strategy aims to strengthen cross-disciplinary research and is building on our successes. With the support of the University, the Unit has grown over the past several years to encompass a total of 20 academic staff, with a range of interests and complimentary backgrounds. We are increasing professor and associate professor appointments, and hiring processes assess research outputs and prioritise grant capture experience in the subject area of Social Policy. This investment has supported three research fellows and seven postdoctoral researchers. Staff aligned to the UoA have supervised 26 research students across the University, with three directly aligned to the UoA. We invested in new postdoctoral and senior researchers. For example, Research Fellow Kantamaneni joined in 2016, postdoctoral researchers Miranda, Morley, Sobnath, Pyakurel, Devereux and Baum-Talmor joined in 2018 and Wadsworth, Senior Research Fellow in 2019, to strengthen research on wellbeing and work, in particular in the maritime sector.

#### *Training and Development*

13. Our Researcher Development Programme (RDP) delivers information, support and professional development to researchers at all career stages and is responsive to sector developments and proposals for additional content. The programme, available to both staff and research students, includes internal training options and prestigious external speakers, recently including the New Economics Foundation on the Theory of Change. In

addition, as indicated earlier, our Mentoring Scheme pairs junior and more senior researchers to provide opportunities for mutual development.

#### *PGR Strategy*

14. Since the award of Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) in 2017, three postgraduate research students have successfully graduated from the Unit.
15. There are two strands to our strategy for enhancing PGR in the UoA. Investment in training initiatives and mentoring for new supervisors is intended to increase our supervisory capacity and enhance the experience of supervisors. In parallel with this, the PGR research environment will be further developed through enhanced opportunities for students to engage in the wider research community, for example by participating in the UoAs research groups and their activities. This will also contribute to the spin-out research groups in Environment and Engineering and Healthcare, building on the successes identified in this UoA and contributing to their development for independent submission in a future REF cycle. In addition, the University has taken a strategic decision to approve at least one fully paid PhD bursary for each UoA annually from 2022 for five years.

#### *Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity*

16. The University's equality and diversity policy is designed to ensure that Solent continues working towards an environment free from discrimination and intolerance in all forms and one in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The University supports staff to enable impact from their research through a regular professional development review process, as well as sabbaticals, residential workshops and research mentoring focused on writing bids and papers or enhancing individual research plans.
17. Within UoA 20 this approach is central to both our community and our research. For example, the Units proportion of female staff is 70%. Which is substantially higher than the overall REF submission from the University which is 40% (see paragraph 34 of the Institutional Level Environment Statement). This is a reflection our research focus on gender, for example the Gender Empowerment and Multicultural Crews Project (see above).

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

#### **Income**

18. The Unit began the period with income in the 2013/14 of £10k across two projects. This has increased to a total annual income during 2018/19 of over £240 across more than a dozen projects. Of this income for 2018/19, over £100k came from national and international government funding, including the EU; and the remainder came from charitable foundations. Total income for the UoA for the period 2013/14 to 2018/19 was £536,883.
19. In addition, UoA staff continue to apply for and be awarded internal University funding to support early-stage research development and project seeding.

#### **Infrastructure and Facilities**

20. During the 2015-2020 period, the University increased its investment to support research in disciplines with recognised national and international outputs and impacts. This included strengthening access to and improving the use of ICT in research.

21. As noted in the Institutional level statement (paragraph 51), within the maritime element of the unit, substantial investment has been made in facilities including a [towing tank](#) and [ship handling centre](#), and a suite of world-leading [maritime simulators](#). This offers not only exceptional training using the latest facilities, but also unique support and expanded capacity for maritime research, particularly around the maritime workplace.

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

22. The nature of the Unit's cross-disciplinary research means that we seek long-term and impactful partnerships to enhance and improve workplace wellbeing, safety, and sustainability. We collaborate extensively with researchers in academia, industry, social enterprises, and government locally, nationally, and internationally. The University's [Civic Charter](#), launched in 2018, has embedded our efforts to work collaboratively to build a fairer and sustainable future for all. We have excellent connections with local groups, including Southampton City Council and the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership. Our international and European links are strong. For example, the recently established Ports, Energy and Carbon Savings and Implementation of Ship Hybridisation Projects (referred to above) funded by the European Union include collaborators from the Netherlands, Belgium and France; while the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) funded [Assessment of Physical and Economic Coastal Vulnerability of South Asia Project](#), led by Kantamaneni, includes partners from across South Asia.

#### Support for interdisciplinary and collaborative research

23. The University has provided internal funding to support and develop interdisciplinary research collaborations through its Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Exchange (RIKE) funding programme. External funding has been won to develop and encourage international working, including from the British Council, the University of Bordeaux and the University of Illinois, for workshops and travel.

24. As described above, the WIL research group was formed in 2018 to bring together an interdisciplinary group of academics and facilitate space for conversations and collaborations to develop. The group provides a platform for seminars and sharing resources through workshops, mailing lists, and online discussions. Moving forward, the group is forging links with external collaborators to develop projects.

#### Networks and research collaborations

25. We have an extensive range of existing networks and collaborations in communities and with representatives of industry and government. These collaborations help us achieve impact and design and implement more rigorous research through contact with key groups and stakeholders. For example, local community engagement is critical for Kantamaneni's work on vulnerabilities of coastal communities in South Asia (see above). The project has involved 1000 participants, and workshops have been attended by agriculturalists (farmers), fishing people, school and university students, and women's groups. Similarly, our global maritime networks led by Wright are working to develop more sustainable technologies for cleaner maritime environments, which will benefit crews, maritime ecosystems and wider society; while work by Devereux and Zhang (see above) is supporting policy for improved wellbeing and working conditions for seafarers and maritime professionals.

#### Events

26. We organise and host a series of well-attended research seminars and meetings both within and beyond the Unit. The Solent Festival of Ideas, held in 2020, aimed to creatively explore how the University could collaborate with a range of partners to tackle

the challenges and change affecting our social, cultural and economic futures and position Southampton as a connected city. The Insight Lecture series includes regular public lectures on a wide range of topics, including Wright on the implications of plastic pollution on society in his talk entitled Bakelite, Billiards and Bottles in April 2018; and Kantamaneni on Natural disasters and coastal vulnerability: Signs of inevitable cycles of climate or the marks of human footprints? in March 2019. Internally, there are formal and informal School and research group-based seminars with external speakers, postgraduate research student seminars, and research half-days to discuss and share our research.

### **Contributions to professional associations and learned societies**

27. We are active contributors to a number of learned societies. Burnell is a member of the Forces in Mind Trust Mental Health Research Programme Expert Review Panel. Wright is a member and elected Chair for Education of the American Center for Life Cycle Assessment, and member of the Forum for Sustainability through Life Cycle Initiatives. He was recognised internationally with the American Center for Life Cycle Assessment (ACLCA) Award for Academic Leadership in 2016. Ratna held membership of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport and The Leisure Studies Association and Co-Chaired the Sport Study group of the British Sociological Association. Baum-Talmor is a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute and the British Sociological Association.

### **Editorships, conference organisation, seminars**

28. Staff are involved in journal editorship and conference organisation with a number of journals and groups in our fields. Kantamaneni was invited as a guest editor to the Special Issue "Coastal Vulnerability and Management: Evaluation of Risk Levels and Mitigation Strategies" of the MDPI journal Sustainability. Wright has provided leadership contribution to the organisation of the ACLCA conference 'LCA' (Life Cycle Assessment) since 2014 and is a Topic Editor to the MDPI journal Sustainability. Burnell is a member of the Editorial Board for the journal Quality in Ageing and Older Adults. Ratna has held positions as an Associate Editor (Sociology) to Humanities and Social Sciences Communications (previously known as Palgrave Communications) and as an Editorial Board Member to Leisure Studies. Farquhar guest-edited a special issue of International Journal of Bank Marketing and Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal. She is also a Member of the Editorial Board of the Service Industries Journal.

### **Summary**

29. Solent is submitting to UoA20 for the first time. The Unit's research community is evolving rapidly and is expected to further develop to support submission to related UoAs in future REF cycles. This reflects the strategic leadership of the Unit, which has focused on investing in its researchers. In addition to recruiting new staff, this has included ensuring that all those with responsibility for research have both dedicated time for their activities and the supports they need to progress in their areas of expertise. This inclusive and nurturing approach has led to a thriving community with strengths in a range of areas of research. In combination with the substantial investment in infrastructure and facilities, this has produced an exciting and vibrant research environment and is a strong foundation from which to continue to grow UoA 20.