REF2021

Institution: Robert Gordon University
Unit of Assessment: UoA34: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

The School of Creative and Cultural Business at Robert Gordon University was established in 2016 and its research activities cover the range of disciplines across the communication, cultural and media studies, library and information management unit of assessment. The School was created with the coming together of the Department of Communication, Media and Marketing and Department of Information Management in the former Aberdeen Business School. Much of the School's research activity has developed out of the Information and Communication Group (ICG) outlined in REF2014, but it has been broadened and enriched by the emergence of research activity in other areas to include creative industries and cultural studies such as events management, fashion management (often both with a strongly cultural focus), as well as digital communication and participation in society, including social media, political engagement online, and journalism. The library and information management theme includes research activity in areas such as user behaviours and skills, information literacy, managing information assets, and information environments, all of which remain present in current research activity; but, with the creation of the new school in 2016, the research activity has broadened. This includes a theme around digital communication and participation in society, which includes work examining political communication, social media, and individuals' engagement with online technologies; as well as another theme around the creative industries and cultural studies, which includes social, economic and cultural aspects around events, fashion, tourism management. All three thematic areas interconnect and overlap, as is demonstrated by the range of outputs discussed later. Across all three aspects, gendered themes as well as historical ones are also explored. The School's research activities are conducting following the highest ethical principles through its own School Ethics Committee and with reference to appropriate professional standards (such as CILIP). Quality and integrity are assured through RGU's Ethics policy and procedures, including mandatory self- and peer-review of all research proposals, governed by the Research Committee's Ethics Sub-Committee. All research outputs are available through Open Air, the University's open access repository.

The period covered by this Research Excellence Framework marked significant changes and transitions for Robert Gordon University institutionally, and for the region of North-East Scotland. The School, like the University more generally, plays an important part in the vibrancy of the North-East Scotland area and, indeed, across Northern Scotland. The School's research seeks to contribute strongly in regional, national and international contexts by carrying out activities that are impactful on individuals, communities and societies. The REF period has coincided with a time of major regional change, including from oil and gas to renewable energies, greater acknowledgement of the role of culture and the creative economy in the region, and the emergence of a strong innovation element in the Aberdeen City and Region Deal and through the creation of Opportunity North East (ONE) as catalysts for transformational economic change.

In 2015-16, the University concluded that there was a need to strengthen the vitality and sustainability of research across the University and that this REF period would be one of re-building and re-shaping, with the aim of establishing a more vibrant interdisciplinary research culture. This reorganisation led to the creation of the School as outlined above. The faculty structure was removed along with their own independent Graduate Schools and the three Research Institutes (Institute for Health and Welfare, Institute for Management, Governance & Society, Institute for Innovation, Design & Sustainability). This submission was previously part of the Institute for Management, Governance and Society (IMaGeS). Although the previous institutes did good work, there was a feeling that they had unintentionally inhibited internal inter-disciplinary research, and that there was, perhaps, a perception that research could be seen as somehow separate from the other main activities and functions of the faculties as a whole. Whilst this was less true in the areas of this submission, where there were pre-existing links, the restructuring was nonetheless welcomed, and has resulted in a much-enhanced inclusive culture of collaboration with, for example, stronger partnerships with the Schools of Computing, Architecture and Art.

Central to the ethos of the School of Creative and Cultural Business is this sense of being a multidisciplinary school covering a wide portfolio of undergraduate, postgraduate and research degrees across the communication, media and digital industries, and related fields. This multidisciplinary approach strongly extends to research activity, and the disciplinary broadening of research over this period is reflected in the outputs and the people submitted.

The Head of School (Royle) is responsible for strategic direction of all activities and is accountable via one of the University's Vice-Principals and the Executive for the School's deployment of research resources, the institutional research strategy, and research performance, balancing these with the provision of excellent teaching. The School has four Academic Strategic Leads, with **Gray** being responsible for leading, managing and developing research activities; he has a strong background in securing European research funding, around transport and transport policy, and in creating international collaborative networks and partnerships; more recently he has been engaged in activities around digital storytelling and other cultural and heritage aspects of the School's portfolio. His outputs are returned in Architecture, Built Environment and Planning. He has led the development of the School's research strategy (outlined later) and has played the lead role in bringing together the research themes and strands from the two previous departments. His leadership has focused around ensuring the School's capacity to build critical mass, in developing strategic collaborations through academic, private and public research partnerships (such as the current Northword / Storytagging project (outlined below) and which is the University's largest social science funded research project. His role has also involved developing and encouraging interdisciplinary research and knowledge exchange, and fostering the research community within the School (including doctoral students and early career researchers).

An important strategic initiative that has been led by the School of Creative and Cultural Business, and developed across the University during the last five years as part of a wider impact and engagement strategy, has been RGU Orkney, which emerged out of preliminary discussions with representatives from Orkney, including council officials and elected members and other stakeholder groups. This work focuses on how RGU institutionally – across all its disciplinary areas – can provide research, innovation and commercialisation to address the challenges and opportunities of the island community. The goal of this has been to make material contributions to the economic, health, social and cultural landscape of Orkney. The institution has supported the engagement of staff with research opportunities in Orkney through travel, workshops, engagement events and other activities.

The appointment of a Development Manager based at the Orkney Research and Innovation Campus in Stromness has been a positive development, particularly facilitating connections and networking between stakeholders in Orkney and staff at the university. Recently, in a school research context, this has also proved beneficial as the Orkney Development Manager also acts as the project manager for the Northword / Storytagging project funded as part of the Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Fund. The School has engaged strongly with RGU Orkney in a number of different contexts (both within the scope of this submission and in other areas associated with the School's activities, for example, tourism and hospitality). RGU Orkney has facilitated closer cross- and multi-disciplinary approaches, a goal intended with the removal of the research institutes in 2015. Work undertaken by **Pedersen** (in collaboration with colleagues in Gray's School of Art and other art schools elsewhere, including in Sweden) has examined heritage and storytelling aspects associated with the history and manufacturing of tweed in Orkney. **Ironside** has been strongly engaged in initiatives and projects in Orkney such as the creation of a Folklore Trail app which sought to benefit visitors but also the local economy and infrastructure by diverting visitors to other, lesser known heritage sites and assets on the islands. This, alongside her project funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh examining digital storytelling and the technology needed to underpin it, is based on strong collaborative partnerships with Professor Donna Heddle, Director of the University of the Highlands and Island's Institute for Northern Studies in Orkney, and within RGU itself with the School of Computing and Digital Media.

The University's commitment to Orkney has proved fruitful for the School's research activity and impact, and, more generally, the initiative continues to grow and develop, particularly in the context

of developing an Islands Deal, bringing together Scotland's three island communities, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, together with academic and other partners. The School's activities, covering areas such as digital communication, storytelling, culture, heritage and, indeed tourism and hospitality, mean that it is likely to play a strong and significant part in this as the development of the strategic case is made to both the Scottish and UK Governments.

The submission comprises staff with significant responsibility for research as well as mid- and early-career researchers. The work of **Baxter, Burnett, Martzoukou** and **Reid** covers library and information management, including social media, knowledge management, information literacy, library management, and library history. Reid also works in aspects of cultural history (local heritage and digital heritage). His work complements that of **Ironside** who, in addition to examining aspects of cultural sociology, undertakes work associated with cultural heritage and digital storytelling. Her research emerges from sociological and psychological studies into the unknown and the supernatural, exploring these in the context of dark tourism and other cultural studies. Burnett's work examines intersections between business, enterprise, knowledge management, information and data, and digital participation. The work of **McKay** and **Pedersen** falls into communication, media studies and journalism. Both **McKay** and **Pedersen** have researched aspects of media relating to gender, participation and engagement. McKay's work explores issues of gender representation in contemporary Scottish political discourse. Pedersen's work includes strong historical angles, which links to Reid and his library history work. Her work also includes a focus on social media and political engagement, complementing the work of Baxter and some of Burnett. **Cross's** work is within the realm of fashion management, focusing on fashion psychology and wellbeing; it links to other creative and cultural aspects of the School's activities, both in teaching and research. The formation of the School of Creative and Cultural Business has facilitated the strengthening and enhancement of cross-disciplinary working and fostered new research collaborations within the team. **Burnett**, **Pedersen** and **Reid** were returned in 2008 and with Baxter and Martzoukou, in 2014. Others returned in this submission are more recent appointments.

The research goals (formulated after the creation of the school) build on those established for the subject areas in 2008 and 2014, as well as broadened and deepening activities with new subject areas (including events management or tourism management). They reflect a commitment to research excellence, sustainability and impact, and a belief that complex societal challenges require new ways of thinking. The School's research reflects its multidisciplinary nature and the University's strong encouragement of inter- and multi-disciplinary activities.

Progress and achievement since 2014: Progress in the review period has been driven by six specific strategic objectives:

- **Enhance the volume and quality of our published outputs** – The volume of published outputs reflects both the established core areas of research activity and, increasingly, the connections and complementarities of disciplines across the new school. Library and Information management research integrates long-standing interests in information literacies, information behaviour and knowledge management around user behaviours and skills, reflecting research interests in exploring and reconceptualising relationships between previously disparate areas. It includes the management of information assets, the role of information as an organisational or societal asset, issues affecting its application, and the examination of information environments, that is to say the specific information-centric contexts, such as libraries, publishers, online, and workplace environments. **Martzoukou's** work focuses around information needs and literacy (including digital literacies) (Outputs 1 & 2); **Burnett** has explored issues associated with information needs in enterprise contexts (1 & 2) and has, with Lloyd, addressed broader issues on the information landscape (3), while **MacLennan** (1) has investigated RDA technologies in knowledge organisation. **Reid** (3) has addressed information environments in work on quality standards in public libraries. Closely related to the library and information management research theme is the activity and outputs around **digital communication and participation in society,** exploring how digital tools, including social media, are exploited, used and engaged with by particular groups and constituencies (including political, cultural and gender-based contexts). **Baxter** (1, 2 & 3) has

examined engagement in the political process online both in UK and overseas contexts and has also addressed issues associated with 'fake news' and 'alternative facts'. **Pedersen** (2) addresses aspects of digital and online participations in online communities from a gender-based perspective, which follows from past work around gender and blogging. **Pedersen** (1 & 4) explores gender and the press in an historical idiom. The work of **McKay** is also rooted in exploration of gender issues in the media (1 & 2), with a focus on perceptions of gender and Scottish politics in both the print and online media. The work of **Reid** (2) has explored digital engagement with local heritage. Both of these themes are also treated in historical research contexts which have, for more than twenty years, been a key facet of the work of **Pedersen** (2 & 4), relating to media history and gender and **Reid** (4), relating to library history and historical bibliography. Ironside's work sits within the creative industries and cultural studies and considers themes around the uncanny, the supernatural or the unexplained with reference to dark tourism and the events industry, and also recently around storytelling and digital cultural heritage, which also has strong ties to digital communication and participation in society. **Cross's** work (1) deploys novel methods and generates model creation in exploring fashion and well-being. **Reid's** work (2) also covers some of this territory by looking at cultural heritage on a local level, often in the context of digital technology.

- **Increase income from research grants** – A strong focus has been placed on increasing research income through submitting at least 19 grant applications per annum led by senior researchers but with early- (ECR) and mid-career (MCR) researchers also included in grant applications (where possible) and two specific early career researcher grant applications each year. This has been led by the senior research team and has resulted in awards from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (**Reid**, Collaborative Doctoral Programme and COVID-19 response). Reid has also secured funding from the Scottish Library and Information Council (Every child a library member, 2016 and Doric Literature Portal, 2018), Pedersen's suffragette work secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund while her work on contemporary gender issues led to funding from Advance HE. **Burnett** obtained £174,000 in the form of a Knowledge Transfer Partnership in 2020. **Gray** with **Cross**, **Ironside** and **Reid** has led the successful StoryTagging project (€1,000,000) which involves partners from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Research funding applications have also been submitted independently by ECR and MCR staff members, with **Ironside** receiving funding from the Royal Society of Edinburgh and **Martzoukou** from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. The target has been the submission of grant applications with a minimum total value of £1.9m per annum, with the goal of generating at least £300,000 in grant income per annum (defined as grant expenditure recovered by the School). In three of the four years from the establishment of the School, the target for research income has been exceeded and in 2019-2020 the School achieved the third highest research income in university.

- **Improve the PGR experience for doctoral students and better integrate them into the research culture of the School** – Enhancing the experience of doctoral students has been a key goal over recent years to ensure that doctoral students are visible and regarded as a valued part of the School. Emphasis has been placed on increasing the proportion of full- and part-time students that complete their PhDs within the expected time period, and achieving a better balance between the relative proportions of full- and part-time doctoral students. There have been 21 completions in this REF and a greater balance with 12 FT and 14 PT research students. Widening the pool of doctoral supervisors has been achieved (through a number of staff successfully completing their own PhDs, 5 at RGU, 2 at other HEIs and a further two having successfully defended their theses and now making corrections), which has resulted in more equitable PGR supervisory loads. Institutionally, the establishment of a single Graduate School has contributed significantly to the enhancements in this area, with stronger monitoring of postgraduate research students as well as the fostering of a stronger sense of community. The latter has been mirrored within disciplinary areas for the School's own research student community, whilst noting that many are at distance.

- **Engage in interdisciplinary research that has a positive impact on business, society, policy and practice regionally, nationally and internationally** – The research activity of the team has made positive impacts across business, society, policy and practice within Scotland, UK and further afield (and outlined in Section 4). The University research strategy is committed

to growing the impact of its research by building critical mass around established research leads. The University is investing in additional resource to support areas where it is already delivering highly impactful research. It is focused on interdisciplinary collaboration, developing new, and nurturing existing, innovative strategic research partnerships with business and industry (e.g. through Knowledge Transfer activities such as with Deans of Huntly and Common Data Access (part of Oil and Gas UK)). The Northword / Storytagging project has been a significant response to this. The project draws together partners in the UK, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Russia and a strong multi-disciplinary team including heritage, culture, storytelling, fashion and creative industries, film-making, and computing and technology backgrounds. Wider university initiatives include the RGU Orkney, through which RGU has engaged actively with a range of stakeholders in Orkney to develop inter-disciplinary research collaborations and opportunities in the sciences, healthcare and social sciences. This is evidenced by the work of **Pedersen** (on Orkney tweeds with Konstfack University of Arts, Craft and Design in Sweden) and **Ironside** (Orkney Folklore app with the School of Computing). Reid also works with art historians at the National Gallery on the AHRC-CDP studentship. Cross's work strongly emphasises inter-disciplinary collaboration with, amongst others, fashion technologists. The Impact Case Studies demonstrate how research undertaken into women in the media has had societal impacts, and research into the role of libraries in supporting children literacy has influenced government and public policy.

- **Enhance our inclusive research culture** – When the School was established in 2016, one of the principal goals was to broaden and deepen the inclusiveness of the research culture. This was in part to bring together disciplines which had, perhaps, been more distinct and separate and partly as a response to the disbanding of the research institutes. Elements around this are outlined in staff development section below.

  Enhance our research capacity – A central theme since the establishment of the School has been raising its profile as a research entity. During this period, four members of staff have successfully completed doctorates and are now embarking on independent research careers (e.g. McKay, who joined the university in 2018). The School's research capacity has been further enhanced through the development of stronger internal collaborations, particularly, with the School of Computing (**Ironside** and the Orkney Folklore app and the Orkney Digital Storytelling project); Gray's Art School (**Cross** and the Weaving the Past into the Future project); the School of Architecture, involving a range of projects (**Gray**, **Reid**, **Ironside**, **Baxter**) and the School of Applied Social Studies (**Ironside** and **Reid** on local legends and folklore). In addition, collaboration with external, and often, international networks has been fostered, such as **Reid** and **Ironside** with the Department of Geography, Media and Communication at the University of Karlstad (Sweden), which has led to funding bids and collaborative participation in workshops, or **Burnett** with Annemarie Lloyd at the University of Borås and, more recently, UCL. **Pedersen's** Visiting Fellowship at the University of Canberra led to five collaborative publications with sociologist Deborah Lupton. The School has benefited from University pump-priming funding initiatives (**Pedersen** with the Suffrage Map and **Ironside** with the Orkney Folklore app) to develop new projects ahead of the development of subsequent larger external funding applications. There has also been focus on developing or enhancing research capacity in areas where there are demonstrable teaching strengths, such as events, tourism or fashion management. The library and information management group has strong pre-existing links with the academic discipline across the United Kingdom and Ireland and internationally through the i-Schools network and other links.

2. People

Staffing strategy and staff development - Growth and sustainability of research since REF2014 have been products of the School's own staff-centred development objectives as well as institutional support structures. A clear focus on development of the research capacity of staff has been integral since the establishment of the School, with both **Royle** and Gray setting the strategic direction. The long-term sustainability, enhancement and vitality of the School's portfolio of research is crucial, and can be observed by the way in which staff have been fostered and developed through successive Research Assessment and Research Excellence exercises with, *inter alia*, **Pedersen** and **Burnett** both attaining professorial status (**Reid's** pre-dates this being in a management role until 2016). Mid- and early-career researchers, such as **Martzoukou** and

Ironside, have been supported through the objective-setting annual appraisal process, as well as through informal mentoring by senior researchers within the School. This includes informal discussion of research ideas, critical peer review of proposals and publications, and frequent collaboration on projects or initiatives. The School has actively sought to appoint post-doctoral research-active members of staff (including **McKay**) and supports existing staff completing part-time doctoral studies (**Reid** supervising four, **Pedersen** supervising two, and **Burnett** one). The School has run a monthly research seminar series which has engendered collegial support and generated new project ideas, with an online approach to these (and to support for both ECRs and part-time staff doctoral students) having been adopted in response to COVID-19. A range of other events regularly support staff development, including workshops on research funding applications (attended by senior as well as mid- and early-career researchers), sandpit events to generate new, multi-disciplinary approaches (e.g. associated with RGU Orkney), ongoing training and development for doctoral supervisors (facilitated on a monthly basis by the Graduate School), and external training and development opportunities.

The management of research within the School is ultimately in the hands of the Head of School and the Academic Strategic Lead for research, and the institutional landscape is outlined in REF 5a. In practice, the day-to-day management is undertaken by the academic strategic lead for research **Gray** (returned in UoA13 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning) in collaboration with the senior researchers in the School (that is those with a significant responsibility for research), and this group, comprising the Professoriate, the Reader, Research Fellow and Research Assistant, meets regularly. For all research-active staff across the School, whether developing, established or senior researchers, individuals agree research objectives with their line manager through the University's Employee Performance Review (EPR) process.

Burnett's work is focused on knowledge. He was previously Theme Leader for Information and Communications in RGU's former Institute for Management, Governance and Society (IMaGeS) and was Associate Director of the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences, 2013-16. He is the Research Degrees Co-ordinator for the school. He has presented at a number of international conferences, including European Conference on Knowledge Management, Conference for e-democracy and open government, and LILAC. He has been involved in doctoral student support, including iDocQ and as iConference doctoral colloquium chair at (Borås, 2020). He has examined widely in the UK and overseas. **Pedersen** is Gender Equality Champion for the university. She is author of *Scottish Suffragettes and the Press* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). The same year she was awarded funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund to produce an edition of the correspondence of Aberdeen suffragette and journalist Caroline Phillips, which led to plaques to suffrage campaigners Caroline Phillips and Louisa Innes Lumsden being unveiled in Aberdeen. She was the Director of the *Rise Up Quines!* festival in Aberdeen in 2018 and is chair of the organising committee for the annual MeCCSA conference to be held at RGU 2022 and is a member of the Board of Directors of Grampian Women's Aid. She was Associate Editor of *Women's Studies International Forum* 2016-20, and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. **Reid** was Head of the Department of Information Management until 2016. He is a member of the AHRC Peer Review College and was on REF Panel 2011-2014. He has worked with the Bowes Museum-National Gallery-Imperial War Museum Consortium for collaborative doctoral awards, with which he currently holds one such award with the National Gallery (London). He is a member of the Board of Trustees of Scottish Library and Information Council and was President of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professions in Scotland (CILIPS) in 2012. He has been editor of the journal *Library and Information History* since 2015. He reviews for the Irish Research Council) and the Swedish Knowledge Foundation. He is co-supervisor of Masters dissertations at Universtitet i Agder (Norway). He devised, on behalf of the Scottish Government, the quality standards used in public libraries, which are now used by all 32 local authorities.

Baxter was keynote at London South Bank University's 'This is Not a Fake Conference' in 2018, and made invited presentations as part of Edinburgh Napier University's 'Informing the Good Society' public seminar series in 2015, and Staffordshire University's 'Information Literacy Teachmeets' series in 2017. He referees papers for eleven different journals in the ILS and political science disciplines, including: *Journal of Information Science*, *Journal of Documentation*, and

British Journal of Political Science. His co-authored paper in the *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, entitled 'Members of the Scottish Parliament on Twitter', won an Emerald Literati Network Outstanding Paper Award in 2017. He is also a reviewer for international conferences such as EGOV-CeDEM-ePart, and a member of the Study of the Scottish Parliament group. **Martzoukou** is a Senior Fellow of HEA and founder of the online network *OneHE Information, Digital and Media Literacy Mindsets.* She has been an ESRC Grants Assessment Panel (GAP) member and reviewer for the Irish Research Council. She is a member of the editorial committee of *Library Management Journal*, the European Conference on Information Literacy and the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T). She has examined doctorates nationally and internationally and been invited speaker at conferences, including keynote at the 2019 CILIP Public and Mobile Libraries conference. She is co-judge of the LILAC Information Literacy Award. **MacLennan**'s work is principally around knowledge organisation, databases, records management and information governance, with his well-received monograph *Information governance and assurance* published by Facet in 2014.

Ironside's work has emerged from her doctoral research, which explored social interactions with extraordinary experiences, and her current activity includes this, group experiences, dark or supernatural tourism in contemporary society. She developed and project managed the Supernatural in Contemporary Society conference in 2019, attracting significant media attention. In a relatively short period of time, Ironside has developed a robust and respected profile in her areas of research, with invitations to conferences, networking partnerships and contributions to monographs.

Strategies for development - A key facet of this was around supporting early career researchers. Mentoring has been established within the school (e.g. Pedersen and McKay, or Reid and Ironside) to support and develop ECRs. A monthly research seminar series has been run since 2017 during term time that showcases research activity from doctoral through to funded projects being currently undertaken, as well as external speakers when appropriate. More recently, in response to the COVID-19 lockdowns, these have moved online and have included more opportunities for wider participation. Through communicating activities internally, collaborations have been developed with other disciplines (Computing and Digital Media, Architecture, Art and Social Sciences); although the disciplines in this submission have always had a strong track-record of multi-disciplinary research and collaborations with other areas, both within and without the University. The University has strongly encouraged the development of support for early career researchers. In 2019, the post of Research Training Coordinator was established (for the first time) at RGU to co-ordinate the University-wide Early Career Researcher Network and to develop training activities for the ECR community. Research Training Coordinator sits jointly within the Research Strategy & Policy and Graduate School teams, acknowledging the complementarity in requirements for training between PGR and ECR communities.

Recruitment over the REF period focused on new areas being developed within the school including data analytics and digital marketing. During this period emphasis has been placed on the recruitment of recently completed doctoral candidates (e.g. Ironside, McKay, Morrison and Ebeke) or those close to completion. The School actively supports (through mentoring by senior staff) early career researchers, who over this REF period have joined RGU (such as Ironside and McKay). The School has been active developing capacity through the University's sabbatical scheme (with three members of staff benefitting from this opportunity out of a total of six within the REF period and with another embarking on a sabbatical in 2021). Their activities during this time have included publication of books, contribution to major research initiatives and generating research income. Another approach has been through seeking to engage ECRs in large research projects, so they gain experience of funded research. Capacity has also been developed through the focused research opportunities presented by RGU Orkney in which staff have fully engaged. All of these initiatives have been supported and encouraged by the Head of School and Academic Strategic lead for Research. The University's internal pump-priming mechanism has further helped to develop research capacity within the School's disciplines around topics including Smart Tourism, digital storytelling, cultural heritage, knowledge economy, creative and cultural industries generally and in relation, more specifically, to RGU Orkney.

Research students – Robert Gordon University has a single Graduate School which manages the research student community across the University, with each School having a dedicated Research Degrees Co-ordinator (Burnett) who manages the doctoral journey for students. The process whereby a single Graduate School was created is discussed in REF 5a. All doctoral students attend a Graduate School Induction and undertake the cross-disciplinary Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods validated in 2002 and delivered in two modules, each of 30 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF level 11) credits (and on which some of the school's School's senior research staff teach). Cross-university seminars and training sessions focus on the doctoral process, aspects of data collection and analysis, writing up, preparation for the viva; developing research proposals for funding; and teaching and demonstrating. In addition to this, students are encouraged to participate in other research training (such as iDocQ and an annual conference for social science doctoral students). Students are allocated principal and secondary supervisors. In addition to the traditional part- and full-time PhD route, the University offers a range of professional doctorates, including, within these disciplinary areas, the Doctorate of Information Science (DInfSc), as well as PhD by public output available to members of academic staff and which was undertaken by **Baxter**.

Students' research represents a continuum of interests across the spectrum of disciplines within the School with current or recent topics including, in **Library and Information management**, communities of practice in information literacy in higher education or information behaviour and digital entrepreneurship in start-ups; in **digital communication and participation in society,** a Conceptual Framework for E-Governance Implementation in the state of Kuwait, youth political engagement in Canada and the UK; in the **creative industries and cultural studies**, the professionalisation of fashion blogging, digital co-creation, regional cultural identity and artisan manufacturers, and representations of the supernatural in media. Historical work is represented by a study of the Dublin Library Society and on Sir Charles Eastlake at the National Gallery.

At present 26 doctoral students are enrolled on either traditional PhD or professional doctorate routes (12 FT and 14 PT) from a range of countries including India, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Qatar, Switzerland, UK, and USA. There were 21 doctoral completions since 2014 within the school, broadly representing the disciplines covered, with 9 being in Information Science and the remainder split across communication, media, marketing, fashion and tourism. **Reid** is (since 2018) principal supervisor on an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Programme studentship with the National Gallery, London and was co-supervisor on a second application with the University of Stirling. Five doctoral submissions are expected 2020/2021.

Equality and Diversity – The University operates both Equality and Diversity and a Dignity at Work and Study policies and has values promoting ambition, approachability, authenticity, collaboration, innovation and respectfulness. The School embraces these aspirations in terms of equality and diversity. The school has gender balance of 52.5% identifying as female, to 47.5% identifying as male. The school includes BAME and mixed nationalities. The university's Gender Equality Champion is a member of the school professoriate. The senior team comprises three females and two males, and the professoriate of two females and three males. The school encourages flexible working with staff working on fractional contracts and/or condensed working arrangements. The school actively supports those staff with caring responsibilities and how these can be managed effectively around work commitments. There are no active researchers with registered disabilities on the staff during the assessment period but the university's systems for protected characteristics are in place for all employees.

The balance for those submitted in this return reflects that school-wide breakdown with 55.5% identifying as female and 44.5% identifying as males. Specific Equality and Diversity training was provided to all staff involved in the preparation of REF submissions. The university's Code of Practice governing staff classification as category A for REF paid close attention to equality and diversity considerations and confidential systems were put in place for staff circumstances, protected characteristics and factors that may have affected research performance in the assessment period. The school operates an open door policy and the wellbeing of staff and

students is a top priority. Staff have two formal meetings with their line manager per year as part of the EPR process, and there are regular informal meetings.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income: The total Research income for the school since its inception has been £232,122 plus more than €1m in projects led by Gray but involving Reid, Ironside and Cross. This total represents a 47% increase over the total (£157,735) reported in REF2014 for the final census year. This acknowledges the different administrative structures from the time of the 2014 submission when staff returned were spread across two distinct departments. The research income indicates that the group has maintained a broad funding base, including the UK funding councils, knowledge transfer partnerships, industry, government, and the third sector.

MacLennan was co-lead on a two-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership (£86,163) with Aberdeen Harbour Board to develop an integrated Information and Record Management (IRM) system for items of corporate memory and documents relating to the functions and activities of the Harbour Board. **Martzoukou** obtained funding from the Information Literacy Group of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals to conduct research into the information experiences of Syrian new Scots. In 2020, **Burnett** secured a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (total project value of £174,235) with Deans of Huntly for a 24-month project aiming to apply business research methodologies in knowledge management, digital marketing, data analytics and brand management to evaluate current company practices to create a framework for continuous knowledge capture and brand strategy development, and to expand their online B2C (business to customer) sales. **Reid** received funding from Scottish Library and Information (SLIC) to undertake a review of the Every Child a Library Member scheme in 2016 (Reid 3). In 2018, he was awarded funding from SLIC's Innovation and Development Fund for the development of the Doric Literature Portal. He also secured an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Programme Studentship with the National Gallery, London (£73,000) and, most recently (May 2020), received £16,000 from AHRC COVID-19 funding to examine how Scottish public libraries developed their digital services and how they supported community cohesion during the lockdown period. **Pedersen** received £8,300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for work on the letters of the suffragette Caroline Phillips in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Glasgow Women's Library (Pedersen 1 & 4). This included an exhibition, school curriculum-related events, the publication of Phillips's letters and a range of public engagement events. She also received funding from Advance HE jointly with School of Pharmacy to investigate perceptions of women-only training in HE. **Ironside** has received funding (£10,000) from the Royal Society of Edinburgh Research Workshop Fund in connection with her work associated with folklore and digital storytelling, which had previously received internal pump-priming. This work has enabled Ironside to create a number of important strategic partnerships and to link to the University's wider RGU Orkney project. Reid and Ironside are also leading the RGU component of work package 2, with **Cross** leading work package 3, of the €1m 'Storytagging' project. Additionally, **Cross's** From Augmented to Authentic, Weaving the Past into Future received £22,517 in funding from AHRC.

Infrastructure: The school's research strategy is supported by the University's Research Strategy and Policy (RS&P), which provides central support and management of research applications and awards, monitors performance, and provides regular analytical reports to aid evidence-based decision-making. RS&P helps promote quality and impactful research and support cross-disciplinary communication and strategic planning. University initiatives such as the implementation of WorkTribe as the University's research management tool have streamlined processes and brought resources together in a useful fashion. The School's professoriate work with Gray to form the research leadership team. The University's Research Committee is chaired by the Vice-Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and in turn reports to the University's Academic Council and Board of Governors. The School also maintains an Ethics Panel comprising the senior research staff which considers and reviews undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students' SPER (Student Project Ethical Review) forms. The University Graduate School for all higher degree students, is responsible for research degree governance reporting to the University's Research Degrees Committee (RDC) chaired by the Vice-Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research. Administrative support for the Research Degrees Committee is provided

by the Graduate School, which maintains the University's quality assurance procedures and systems in support of the doctoral journey. During the period of the COVID-19 lockdown, a number of oral examinations have been completed online.

Facilities: RGU has excellent facilities for the execution and dissemination of research. The physical environment, comprising a mix of closed and open-plan spaces, is conducive to both private study and team work, and all of the school's PGR students are allocated their own dedicated space. Shortly prior to REF2014, the University consolidated on one campus for the first time with the completion of an extensive three-phase, £120 million, building programme which saw addition of 34,000m^2 of new buildings, including a new University library. Staff and students have access to the full range of ICT and library resources expected at a modern university and dissemination is supported through RGU's Open Access repository (Open-Air).

COVID-19 has imposed certain challenges on aspects of the School's research activities, particularly where face-to-face data collection was integral to projects. This has been, perhaps, most significant in the Northword / Storytagging project, where all of the story gathering elements (including workshops with heritage and community organisations) had to be moved online. The wider School research community has, however, responded to these challenges with agility. In some other projects, funders have agreed extensions until such time as physical events can be held (e.g. Reid's #Doric project) or have accepted amelioration steps for particular activities.

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

The School's research, in its various constituent disciplinary areas, has strong collaborations and networks. This is particularly the case with Baxter, Burnett, Pedersen, and Reid because of the long-established nature of information and communication-related research. It is also increasingly being mirrored in more emergent research themes around digital storytelling, heritage, fashion, events and tourism management.

Gray, in leading the Northword / Storytagging project has developed partnerships with University of Ulster, University of Highlands and Islands, as well as local authorities and heritage partners in Finland, Sweden and Russia, as well as in the United Kingdom and Ireland. These partnerships have been deepened by the works of Reid, Ironside, and Cross through their work in respective work packages led by RGU. Links through this project have been particularly strengthened and deepened with the Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research at University of Highlands and Islands, Kvarken Council (in Finland) and Västerbotten (in Sweden) with, in particular, co-participation in workshops and seminars.

The information management researchers made a contribution to that discipline and its research base through the School's i^3 Conference, bringing scholars and researchers from fifteen countries and establishing a strong international network from the traditionally separate user-focused fields of information literacy, information behaviour, and impact, to examine research questions and methodological issues, and to inform research agendas. The strong record of keynotes include Choo (Toronto), Kulthau, Todd, (Rutgers), Limberg, (Gothenburg), continuing in 2015 with Bawden (City). Sundin (Lund), Kilbride, (Digital Preservation Coalition) and in 2017 Thoms (Sheffield), Fulton, (Dublin), and Sippitt (Full Fact, the fact-checking agency). The collaborations and networks within this academic community are strong and enduring, both through the i^3 Conference, the iSchools network and other groups. Mirroring the approach of i^3 conference, the School also supported, in 2018, the Supernatural in Contemporary Society conference which was organised by **Ironside** to explore contemporary responses to the unexplained. It brought together a wide range of scholars from diverse academic disciplines and had, as keynotes, Waskul (Minnesota) on the promise of the supernatural, and Clarke (Sheffield Hallam) on the (UK) National Archives UFO Project.

The information management group at RGU, along with Glasgow, Strathclyde and Edinburgh Napier, was founder member of the original Information Science Pathway of the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences, which created iDocQ (an annual information science doctoral student

colloquium), which has now developed into a broader doctoral training event for social scientists. **Burnett** served as an Associate Director of SSSGS until June 2016.

Pedersen was Visiting Fellow, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, Australia, 2015. Her work has made significant contributions to public and societal discourse about women's engagement within and participation in media. This has involved both historical and contemporary perspectives, including the *Rise Up Quines!* Festival, which brought to wider attention the suffragette campaigns in north-east Scotland and led to several media appearances. Pedersen's work was also recognised more widely on *Women's Hour* on Radio Four and on Radio Scotland, as well as by her participation in the Just Festival at the Edinburgh Fringe where her historical and contemporary work on women's engagement with social media was presented in the context of #MeToo. She has contributed to Women's History Scotland's web-based resources on the suffrage movement in Scotland and was a keynote for them in 2018. Pedersen's work has included collaborative research council bids with Hallett (Huddersfield) on public engagement and press response to women-only medical initiatives in Britain in 1914-23 and with Ryan (Sheffield) and Gilligan (Tuar Ard, Dublin) on press coverage of the Scottish and Irish women's suffrage campaigns. Her work has had impacts on public discourse (through the media) around women's participation in the media generally, and online environments in particularly, as well as, in an historical context raising general awareness of suffrage campaigns and campaigners in north Scotland.

Reid's work around various aspects of public library management in Scotland have similarly had societal impacts with the *How good is our public library service?* being implemented in January 2016 as the Scottish quality enhancement framework to be used across all 32 local authorities, and many reviews have been undertaken using the new mechanism. Reid has chaired a number of these (including Scottish Borders, Angus, and two in Shetland). Subsequently, the review of *Every child a library member* undertaken by Reid and Hood influenced the move from the pilot scheme to an embedded goal outlined in successive Scottish Government *Programme for Government* statements, with the recommendation from the report that the scheme refer to *active* membership. The results of this were widely disseminated to the practitioner communities in the UK through conference presentations (SLIC Annual Showcase, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Scotland annual conference, Library Association of Ireland annual conference). His 2020 funding to examine Scottish public libraries' response to COVID-19 lockdown is in partnership with the Scottish Library and Information Council and is likely to identify activities and legacies which may have enduring societal impacts on the delivery of services. His work on storytelling and digital heritage has included collaboration on research funding applications with the Archive for Peace and Human Rights (Norway) and (with Ironside) the University of Karlstad (Sweden). This latter collaboration with Karlstad extends to other activities around digital storytelling, also involving Ironside, including a joint presentation at the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre's Nordic Symposium (postponed because of COVID-19).

Ironside has fostered these international collaborations with Karlstad, including hosting a seminar with their Platsbaserade Digitala Upplevelser research group in September 2019. She has also undertaken work which has both societal and economic benefits, not least in Orkney (associated with the University's strategic RGU Orkney initiative as outlined above) through the creation of a folklore app, which tells stories of the community and is both an exercise in digital storytelling but also a tool to manage the flow of tourists across Orkney rather than concentrating them in a few highly visited spots and thus bringing wider societal and economic benefits to that community. In respect of Ironside's digital storytelling work, she has fostered and developed meaningful partnerships with the University of the Highlands and Islands generally and with its Institute of Northern Studies in connection with projects specifically in Orkney. She has also been an invited panellist at events in Copenhagen, Mannheim, Manchester and Loughborough on aspects of Dark Tourism and uncanny events.

Cross's work in the fashion management realm is centred on notions of comfort from clothing, looking at both the physical and psychological aspects that could contribute to well-being. With colleagues in the Schools of Computing, and Art, she is leading the AHRC-funded Weaving the

Past into the Future project looking at how to educate consumers about the craftsmanship, heritage and value of traditional fashion and textile products both in the UK and in China. The project is a partnership between RGU and Donghua University and the Shanghai International Fashion Innovation Centre.

Martzoukou and **Burnett's** work examining the information needs of Syrian New Scots was subsequently used as a source of evidence in the Scottish Government's *New Scots refugee integration strategy 2018-2022.* This work has been disseminated at a range of practitioner-based events and conferences across the UK. **Baxter's** work on fake news has demonstrated wide reach across society through appearances on Radio Scotland and with press reports (subsequently picked up on by Scottish political parties). Interconnected research on politicians' use of social media has been referred to in press, including publications as diverse as the *New Scientist*, *The National*, *The Sun,* and *The Daily Mail*.

Staff have acted as external examiners for doctoral theses at a wide range of institutions including Northumbria University, King's College, London, University of Sheffield, Edinburgh Queen Margaret University, Liverpool John Moore's University, Aberystwyth University, Loughborough University, Manchester University, Tampere University (Finland), the Ionian University (Greece) and University of Borås (Sweden). Reid also acts as external assessor for the annual progress reviews of Information Science doctoral students at Glasgow.