

<b>Institution: Ulster University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 27</b>
<b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b>

## Context

English Language and Literature at Ulster is based in the School of Arts and Humanities in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. It is **a cultural leader in its region** with a long engagement with academic and public audiences and an increasing global outreach. It operates as an international centre in Irish literary and bibliographical research, Irish and Scottish studies, creative writing, biographical scholarship, 19th-century literature and gender and American studies. During this period members of the English research Unit have disseminated their research on the world stage through publications (125 outputs); conference organisation (10+) and participation in major research projects and consultancy with government, education and the creative industries. The Unit has 12 full-time members of staff with a dedicated research professor, and as in REF2014, 100% of staff in English are submitted to REF2021. In this period the Unit has produced 17.82 successful PhD completions and continues to support a vibrant postgraduate community of doctoral researchers. The Unit's research spend for this period is £1,176,591, an increase of 53.5% on our spend of £766,348 in REF2014.

## Research and Impact Strategy

Our strategy is supported by the Ulster University Research and Impact Strategy (2017-2022) which designates 4 strategic priorities: social renewal; sustainability; healthy communities; and creativity and culture. The Unit aligns its research strategy under the following principles:

1. To operate as a **key local and national centre for research in English literature** with particular specialisation in literary criticism, theory, biography, creative writing and Ulster-Scots studies.
2. To build on our successes in the RAE2008/REF2014 exercises and **expand our range of scholarly activities** founded on the research strengths of colleagues and their development of dynamic, interdisciplinary collaborations with local, national and international partners. These activities aim to produce important research, disseminated through the best possible channels and to generate timely and considered impact.
3. To **nurture, mentor and promote the research activities of all staff** in an inclusive and supportive manner. Particular attention is paid to assisting and guiding all colleagues to develop their careers as academic researchers within the subject.
4. To partner with the Doctoral College to **nurture the next generation of researchers** in English literature at postgraduate and early-career doctoral/postdoctoral levels.

## Research Strategy from REF2014

As part of its strategy the Unit has worked toward the following goals in the present research cycle.

- Maintain quantity and quality of outputs.
- Expand our vibrant research environment within the discipline, region and economy.
- Focus efforts on extension of research centres that enable all colleagues to develop as researchers.
- Generate a flexible, sustainable and ambitious research plan for the next cycle.

**Maintain quantity and quality of outputs**

The Unit prides itself on the strong tradition of research produced within the subject team. The former UoA 29 emerged in the last REF as **one of the most successful units within the faculty in delivering internationally significant research outputs**. This created solid foundations to build on this success in the most recent cycle. Ulster's geographical position situates it very well in a confluence of academic and industry interconnections, including scholarly networks in the UK and avenues for collaboration and cultural exchange with Irish institutions. The research interests of colleagues in literary biography, minorities and indigenous cultures demonstrate the reach of the Unit's work into European and North American networks.

Significant outputs have remained the bedrock of the Unit's productivity over the past seven years. In this cycle **we exceeded our group target of outputs by 278%** (an additional 80 outputs). This has been led by the internationally-recognised work of Bradford in literary biography and theory, including major biographies of Orwell and Hemingway and a well-received examination of Larkin. Bradford and his co-editors and contributors from the Unit, including Butler, Byrne, De Ornellas, Hancock, Jedrzejewski, Keanie and Ward, have showcased their literary scholarship in a range of publications including *A Companion to Literary Biography* (Wiley Blackwell, 2018), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Literature* (Wiley Blackwell, 2020) and *Contemporary Publishing and the Culture of Books* (Routledge, 2020). Colleagues including Bradford, Byrne and Ward have produced significant monographs in their research areas, and all colleagues have published significant essays in journals with international reputations. Creative writing has also produced a broad range of publications in prestigious journals, and McCracken's work won the *Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing* in 2019.

**Extension of Outreach**

The current cycle has shown the Unit's ambition to extend its research environment and impact to match the high quality of its outputs. This has been assisted by **strategic restructuring by the university that placed developing research as a priority** under the Five and Fifty Strategic Plan, provided proactive support for colleagues engaged in research, and created a Doctoral College to enhance the experience of PhD researchers and supervisors.

**Extension of Research Centres**

With institutional support, the Unit saw a continued focus on a series of major projects which generated public outreach and impact, including: The Representation of Jews in Irish Literature (Ferguson, Kennedy-Andrews, Montgomery, Ó Dochartaigh [Galway], Peters (2013)); Ulster-Scots Education Project (Ferguson, White, Clarke [Education] (2013-18)); Ulster-Scots Collectors Project (Ferguson, Jedrzejewski, White, Thompson [QUB] (2013-19)), Ulster International Literary Festival (Ferguson, Jedrzejewski, Glover (2016)), Stendhal Hedge School (Byrne, Ferguson, Murphy (2017)), Willa Cather Symposium and Festival (Ferguson, Murphy (2018)) and John Steinbeck Community Festival (Murphy (2019)).

The Unit has further extended its reach through the creation of the Ulster Literary Biography Research Centre (ULBRC) (director Bradford). The centre is **unique globally as the first research centre to use literary biography to further theoretical inquiry into the nature of literary creativity**, applying its findings to key figures in English language writing. ULBRC is host to a major research and publishing project devised by Bradford, who acts as General Editor. 'The Life of the Author' is a series of at least 75 single-authored, peer-reviewed volumes published by Wiley Blackwell, covering major writers and movements in English, Irish and American literature. It will be unique in its objective of building bridges between literary biography for the general reader and its academic counterpart.

ULBRC operates alongside the Ulster Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies (director Ferguson). In the last five years this centre has hosted two major externally funded projects for the Unit, The Ulster-Scots Education Project, funded by the former NI Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure, and The

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Representation of Jews in Irish Literature, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The centre's role as a focus for interdisciplinary examinations of minority cultures in Ulster and globally has seen it engage in symposia in partnership with universities in Scotland, France, Poland and the USA. Ferguson, White and Sneddon [History] have been consultants on Ulster-Scots issues for the NI administration, local councils, museums and film and radio production companies in the UK and Ireland. The centre has also assisted in hosting major international conferences such as the Canadian Association for Irish Studies Annual Conference, Derry~Londonderry 2017, and the Sylvia Plath Conference, Belfast 2017.

## Flexibility in Planning

The relative stability in personnel and institutional change that the Unit has enjoyed in the last cycle has enabled effective planning and greater research activity than in REF2014. All Unit members are research-active and attuned to their roles within the Unit and School, which has enabled them to adapt to changes with agility. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, colleagues have moved to virtual conferencing and running activities via electronic platforms. Byrne, Ferguson, Jedrzejewski and White have used these platforms to deliver conference papers and talks. Butler has organised an AHRC 'Being Human' café event on Dystopian Literature. Ferguson has taken part in Culture Night and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) café events focused on linguistic diversity. As part of Halloween celebrations with Derry and Strabane City Council, a major regional festival, Byrne and Ferguson have given talks based on their published research. Byrne has worked with the university's Riverside Theatre in developing online lectures, and with Ferguson has developed cultural exchange activities with St Petersburg College, Florida.

## Research Structure and Outlook

Research is managed by the Research Director (RD) who, along with the Head of School (HoS), liaises with colleagues in the development of their research through annual discussion on each individual's research plan. Decision-making for the submission of research is carried out by a sub-group of internal and external reviewers which includes the RD, HoS and Associate Dean for Research & Impact (ADRI). This also helps inform the process of developing research objectives for future years.

## Our objectives for the next REF cycle are to:

- maintain and support academic development of all colleagues within the Unit;
- encourage research collaborations within the Unit and across disciplines;
- nurture and extend knowledge exchange with our various partners in academia, creative industries, education, government, and the public sector, with focus on bio-festivals, creative writing, literary biography and Ulster-Scots literature;
- expand our vibrant group of researchers through external funding awards;
- increase our reach in consultancy with stakeholders in order to provide guidance on issues of local, national and international significance including ecology, ethnicity, gender, linguistic identities, medical humanities and race; and
- continue our commitment to equality and diversity. We will maintain and enhance our relationship with minority and marginalised groups, considering issues of race, diversity and openness.

To achieve these aims the Unit will devolve an agreed amount (20%) of its research budget each year. This will be carried out within the wider aim of progressing toward an open research environment. This process has begun, with Ulster University being a signatory of DORA and a supporter of the principles the Leiden Manifesto and the Metric Tide. This process will be regulated in the context of research integrity. All work carried out by the Unit is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards: for example, English has 100% staff completion of the research integrity online course.

## 2. People

### Staffing strategy and staff development

Since REF2014 Ulster University has sought to extend, enhance and intensify research and impact within each Unit of assessment. This has resulted in the creation in each Unit of **a full-time Research Director post (Ferguson), whose role is to direct and drive the Unit's research and impact in collaboration with colleagues**; a Grade 5 Academic Excellence Administrator assists this role. Ferguson also covers the role of Postgraduate Tutor in the Unit to support and manage PhD researchers, with the assistance of a Grade 3 Clerical Officer. At Faculty level, the Associate Dean for Research and Impact chairs the RD Forum (RDF) which meets monthly to drive strategy, and a Faculty Peer Review College supports the development of grant applications. To extend the Faculty's core support for staff, Ulster's Doctoral College was established in 2017, offering centralised support for researchers, advising on research activity, coordinating postgraduate admissions and providing guidance for researchers to sources of funding and postgraduate employment specific to their skills and expertise.

### Recruitment

The subject team consists of 12 full-time members of staff, who are committed to the research aims of the Unit. Sadly, the team lost the highly respected Kennedy-Andrews, who passed away in 2015; otherwise the team has remained constant during this period. The Unit's considerable research experience means all colleagues enjoy established status as academics who, having consolidated their positions within their scholarly areas, focused in the last period on building their reputations further. All colleagues are on permanent contracts. There is considerable managerial experience in the team and good succession planning for the next cycle for roles including Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor.

### Employment

Career progression opportunities remain strong at Ulster, where two new lecturer posts were created in the last cycle, and Butler and White successfully completed their probationary periods and have advanced to Grade 8 lecturers. The most significant promotion in the cycle was a female appointment, with White having achieved the role of Associate Head of the School of Arts and Humanities. Ferguson gained promotion to Senior Lecturer in 2015 and was appointed as the Unit's Research Director in 2017. Jedrzejewski served a distinguished term as Dean of the Faculty at Arts and returned to the Unit, where he has proved a major asset with his expertise and international contacts.

### Research Culture

The Unit works with our Department for Research and Impact's dedicated research development managers, and staff receive guidance and financial support to:

- prepare and submit funding applications;
- lead strategic research initiatives aligned to the Unit's impact strategy;
- invite external colleagues to secure contribution from outside sources; and
- attend international conferences and undertake archival research.

Senior members of the team play a major role in the peer review, training and mentoring of staff within the Unit and elsewhere in the Faculty. Bradford, Ferguson and Jedrzejewski have served on the university Research Mentoring Programme for colleagues in English, Education and History.

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### Professional Development

Alongside the University-wide research training programmes RIGOUR (grants), SOARING (outputs), Impact Development Series, research training and review is incorporated into all subject committee meetings. Each colleague maintains a research and impact plan, discussed annually with the RD, and guidance is provided on approaches to research through the RD and HoS. This is supplemented by the input of Bradford, who provides guidance on project proposals, editing and theory, and by Jedrzejewski, who offers expertise in relation to research development, governance, ethics and project management.

In addition, strategic support is provided through associated Visiting Professors, Fellows and external examiners (for both taught and research degrees) who have been chosen as additional mentors to contribute to high-grade research-led teaching and Unit meetings. The three Visiting Professors, Prof David Hayton (QUB), Prof David Pattie (Birmingham) and Prof Norman Vance (Sussex), are leading academics in their respective fields.

### Career Development

In addition to the input of the RD, the Unit has created **a range of research mentors** who provide seminars on their work, deliver guidance to colleagues and researchers, help with project scoping and project management and support the review process for major initiatives such as the Ulster-Scots Education Project. The research mentors have expertise in European settings (Prof Wesley Hutchinson, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3), in industry and heritage (Robert Heslip, Heritage Officer, Belfast City Council) and in local, migration studies and FE (Alister MacReynolds, Ulster). They support the Unit in its closer alignment with the region's cultural and economic networks, while opening potential to extend the Unit's reach into national and international partnerships. This process operates as part of the Unit's implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

### Research Environment

The Unit provides extensive support, including financial support, for individual and collective research. UoA 27 has received £54,907 in the past four years as part of its research budget, which has provided each Unit member with over £1,000 per year to conduct research, with the potential to seek further financial support from the Faculty.

Since the last research exercise, the Unit has moved to a £11M purpose designed arts building, the I-block, that incorporated the latest technology and ecology, where every colleague is assigned their own office space, alongside communal breakout areas, teaching and meeting rooms, and conference facilities. Colleagues are provided with their own PC and laptop for research, and specialist software if required, which has been supplemented during the Covid-19 period with additional resources for colleagues to facilitate working from home. Colleagues take advantage of excellent research facilities at the university library and are supported by a Subject Librarian. The library's archives have particular strength in local and Irish literature, particularly in Ulster literature of the 19th to 21st centuries, and the Unit has collaborated with the library to curate physical and virtual exhibitions on subjects including the poet John Hewitt, Ulster-Scots poets, and the representation of Jews in Ireland. Its work with partner organisations to disseminate knowledge on these collections has generated impact with institutions, educators, the creative industries and the public.

Support for research is underpinned through a series of measures. **At least two days a week (40% of working time) is dedicated for research**, with the exception of Bradford who has a 100% research designated contract. Workload allocation enables the Unit to offer agility on time management so that teams and individuals can concentrate on project delivery when necessary. The long-standing fair and equitable teaching grid system in the Unit seeks to apportion all teaching time transparently across the subject and permits colleagues to balance their teaching effectively across the academic year. This operates alongside the universally-available system for funded



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sabbaticals/research leave, which has enabled all colleagues to produce outputs incorporated in the present return. It has enabled Byrne, Jedrezejewski and White to apply for further funding and/or complete research projects.

## Early Career Researcher support

The Unit draws on the existing University structures to enable early career researchers to develop and flourish in their positions. In this cycle White has successfully moved from ECR status to a full lectureship role. ECRs are assigned a mentor who provides support and guidance on settling into the Unit and the subject area, alongside support from People and Culture, and assistance from the HoS, the RD and the subject team leader in the initial period. ECRs are provided with guidance on targets for research, outputs, project management and delivery, and have access to the University's training programmes (RIGOUR, SOARING and Impact) and the mentoring programme. These initiatives, engaged with by the majority of colleagues, offer additional opportunities for team building within the Unit. White has benefitted from the appointment of Visiting Professor Pattie, who acts as an additional mentor in her field of expertise and helps drive the development of her research networks and project creation.

The Unit's strong ambitions to develop more opportunities for ECRs were realised in two major externally-funded research projects: The Representation of Jews in Irish Literature and the Ulster-Scots Education Project, which together created 4 ECR posts (3x100% FTE and 1x50%FTE). Each fellow/assistant was offered the university and Unit's full mentoring and training programmes, alongside the mentorship provided by the PI and CIs on each project. These colleagues were fully integrated into the Unit, with the opportunity to develop their teaching experience on subject modules and/or summer schools. They had access to university promotion routes: some found full lectureships in the Unit (White) while others (Peters) were supported in seeking promotion to Research Fellow. All ECRs were encouraged and given time to develop publications and outputs and to attend conferences and archives relevant to their research.

## Equality and Diversity

English Language and Literature is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment and to working within Ulster University and with wider societal initiatives to realise this aim. Diversity and inclusivity are actively promoted and embedded in all research processes and policies as outlined in our Code of Practice (CoP). The CoP places people at its centre, is mindful of the needs of all staff and ensures barrier-free processes to maximise inclusivity and participation in REF, and we used it as our roadmap to identify SRR staff and select outputs for REF2021. A quarter of staff come from outside the UK/RoI. In the past seven years, **the proportion of women in the Unit has increased from 26.67% to 33.33%**, and **50%** of our promotions involved women. The Faculty is developing its Athena SWAN policy, to be implemented by 2022. All staff are compliant with research ethics and 100% have taken the institutional equality and diversity training. The Unit offers and encourages uptake of unconscious bias training.

The research interests of the Unit in ecocriticism, feminist theory, gender, race and minority cultures have long placed issues of diversity and inclusion at the heart of our research ethos, and this focus continues. The Unit is motivated by research interests on gender and race (Butler, Byrne, De Ornellas, Hancock, Keanie, McCracken, Murphy and Ward) to explore ways of 'Decolonising the Curriculum' and challenging hegemonies within academia and beyond through research dissemination and outreach. The Unit furthermore is scrupulous in ensuring that all outputs and activity generated for REF2021 are selected under fair and inclusive equality and diversity criteria.

The Unit contributes to the university's planning on diversity. Ferguson sits on the university assessment group for bilingual signage and is working with Comer [Celtic] and Morrow [School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences] in a series of outreach panel discussions on linguistic diversity in NI society run in collaboration with Culture Night, Derry and Strabane Borough Council, the University's Diversity Hour and the ESRC Festival.

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The Unit provides flexible working arrangements for colleagues with family/carer responsibilities, or who have other personal needs. Support is offered by the RD and HoS, as well as People and Culture, and a range of options is available to support colleagues through difficulties, with potential to seek emergency/family leave or to balance work-life commitments in a way that is beneficial to the individual. In the reporting period two colleagues benefited from the University's maternity and paternity leave respectively, and one colleague took advantage of emergency family leave.

## Research students

### Support mechanisms for and evidence of the training and supervision of post-graduate students

The English unit has cultivated a thriving postgraduate research community of 13 current researchers and **we have awarded 17.82 successful doctorates in the present cycle, well above the national benchmark figure**. The Unit has secured three funded places each year in the last four years, predominantly in Department for Education NI or Vice-Chancellor's Research Scholarship (VCRS) funding. VCRS is an internal award offered by the university and permits the funding of international PhD researchers; in the last cycle the Unit gained **18 research scholarships**. In 2020 the Unit gained its first AHRC Northern Bridge Collaborative Doctoral Award in association with UoA 23 and Causeway and Glens Museum Service. This highly sought-after award from an AHRC-funded programme provides additional funding and training for candidates who also gain industry experience as part of their doctoral research.

The Doctoral College (DC) supports PhD supervisors with a development programme aimed at enhancing understanding of their roles and responsibilities, providing workshops for new and experienced PhD supervisors to explore the key features of an effective supervisor-PhD researcher relationship, and consider potential solutions to common challenges. These workshops ensure a shared understanding of the PhD process from enrolment to graduation at Ulster University, including the associated timelines, milestones and assessment procedures. The workshops are mandatory from 2020 for all PhD supervisors who wish to apply for studentship funding. Results of the PRES indicate high levels of satisfaction among our researchers: **in 2019, Ulster University was ranked 8th out of 103 UK universities for postgraduate researcher satisfaction, and 3rd out of 103 for research culture**.

In the last cycle all members of the Unit were involved in the supervision of PhD researchers; this has enabled the Unit to provide a range of experience on each supervisory panel and also to increase capacity for supervision.

The Unit seeks to provide dedicated support and mentoring to PhD researchers through a variety of opportunities. Generally, full-time researchers are offered at least two seminar groups to teach over one semester, under the supervision of the RD and the relevant Module Co-ordinator. They are further mentored through the university's "First Steps in Teaching" qualification which is carried out under the guidance of a full-time member of the Unit.

PhD researchers benefit from a superb working environment within a dedicated suite of rooms on the top floor of our new building, shared with peers from elsewhere in the Faculty, which encourages the development of interdisciplinary networks including a lively, researcher-instigated group who rehearse presentations in advance of assessment meetings and conferences. In addition, PhD researchers in English are supported by the Postgraduate Tutor (Ferguson), who provides additional pastoral care and a warm welcome during induction on arrival on campus. Researchers are encouraged to take part in DC events and competitions and celebrations of success. **The DC organises a week-long Annual Festival of PhD Research across all four campuses**, bringing together researchers and staff in a programme which includes keynotes, presentations and social interaction. The conference programme is developed entirely by PhD researchers supported by DC staff. Since 2018, PhD researchers within the Unit have taken part in the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.

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PhD researchers also gain experience in conferences and symposia organised by colleagues in the Unit. They obtain insights into the design, implementation and running of these events, alongside traditional sources of development such as offering papers and disseminating their work in conference proceedings. Researchers are also encouraged to work on major projects the Unit has undertaken, which provides experience of assisting in project management and the chance to network with academic, educational, cultural and other public bodies and individuals. They also **gain experience of developing project ideas, applying for funding and fellowships, and awareness of the creation of impact through research and outreach**. PhD researchers can participate in the Unit's research seminar series (including those run by English Research and the School of Arts and Humanities), seek funding through the RD for research-related activities and offer papers to the Faculty postgraduate journal. They can also take advantage of membership of the Unit's two research centres, which offer routes to publication, the option of presenting at conferences and symposia, and the opportunity to network with industry, public and academic bodies. The unit has sought in this cycle to expand opportunities in creative writing, with McCracken overseeing a growth in applications for research by creative writing at Ulster. In 2019 the unit advertised for the first time an innovative University **Writer-in-Residence** PhD, and in the most recent cycle the unit sought a PhD researcher to work with Bradford in the ULBRC to gain insight into the theoretical nature of the subject and to develop first-hand knowledge of book production within the trade book sector.

The Unit recognises and celebrates success in research and hosts launches for publications and outputs by its staff and PhD researchers, including events for Bradford, Byrne, Davies, Ferguson, Jedrzejewski, Keanie, Kelly and White. Such events underscore the commitment of the Unit to producing good work, and act as focal points to disseminate work to colleagues, academia and the public. In this cycle the Unit assisted in the revival of a creative writing anthology *The Paperclip*, enabling publication of work by students, researchers, staff and writers in the university's alumni network. The project was edited by doctoral researchers and MA students, who have gained valuable experience from their involvement in the project, and a second anthology is in press.

Doctoral graduates within the Unit have gained lectureships and other prestigious appointments within their discipline or cognate areas in a number of institutions; they include Gray (Dalarna University, Sweden), Hughes (Wave Trauma Centre / QUB), McCreedy (Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski', Bulgaria), Morrissy (UCD), O'Brien (University of Glasgow), Reynolds (Fulbright Scholarship-in-Residence, University of Tulsa), O'Brien (UCD), Hughes (Wave Trauma Centre, Belfast) and Woods (Ulster). Other researchers have gained professional roles in arts management, such as Glover (Glasgow City Council).

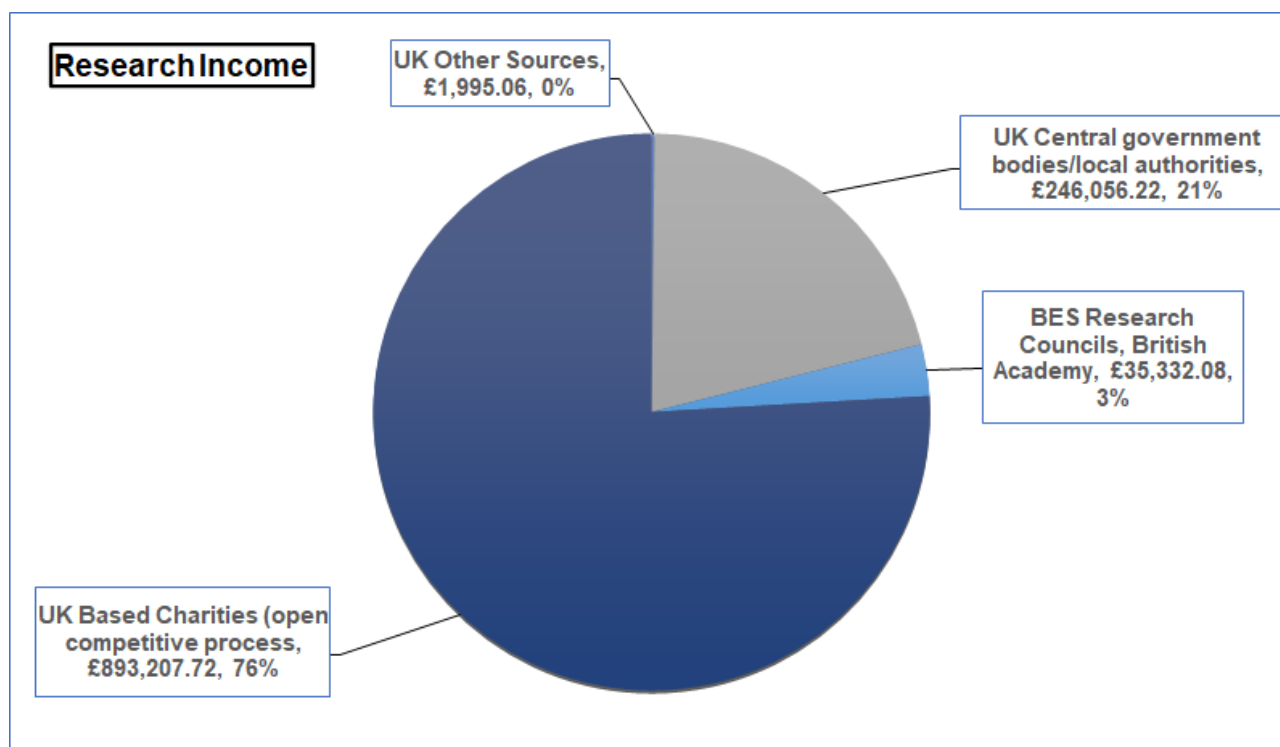
### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The English Unit has during the period secured external research awards to the value of £405,486 which has enabled it to increase its research spend on the last REF cycle by 53.5% from £766,348 to £1,176,591. This represents a **65% increase in spend** per fte from £59,047 to £98,049.

The funding research strategy was to support colleagues with a strong track record in gaining funding and to assist colleagues who had not gained funding in the past to enhance their capability to do so. This approach resulted in unprecedented success for the Unit in the previous REF cycle, with the majority of this work and spend carrying into the present cycle. Lessons learned from this success have been shared with all colleagues, meaning that **the Unit has moved from a minority of colleagues seeking funding to a majority who regularly engage with income generation to extend the reach of their work**. Major applications are currently in progress for the next research cycle.

Ferguson, Jedrzejewski, Kennedy-Andrews, Murphy, Ward and White have spearheaded the development of project income generation with successful bids to the AHRC and other funding providers. Ferguson, Jedrzejewski, McCracken and White (when at ECR status) have been particularly **successful in attracting non-standard streams of income** from local government sources in Northern Ireland.





### Infrastructure

The Unit budget, devolved from the ADRI to the RD, is used for conference attendance, research events, purchase of research services, seminars and academic visitors, and to support the teaching requirements of PhD researchers. The university funds secretarial and administrative support and a technician supports staff and PhD researchers.

The university provides access to competitively awarded internal funding streams, in particular the Research Challenge Fund. Of which the Unit secured £1,000 to enable staff aligned to the Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, to bring in Professor Wesley Hutchinson - who was appointed as a Visiting Scholar in 2014 as part of this fund. This culminated in English assisting Professor Hutchinson to publish *The Ulster-Scots Imagination* as part of a joint project with the Irish Government and an NI-based community group (Pretani Associates).

The research strategy for funding income generation remains a priority within the Unit. Through the period under review Ferguson, in association with Jedrzejewski, McCracken and White, has **continued to generate major- and medium-scale funding success**. In addition to his accomplishments on local government-funded projects, Ferguson has undertaken the role of CI on the AHRC project *The Representation of Jews in Irish Literature*. The Unit mentors and supports all colleagues in developing their projects with funding and impact opportunities in mind and has helped all its members to develop their skills and capacity in this area. This has seen successful bids return from the British Academy (Jackson [Media] and Ferguson £9,102) and the British Council (Ferguson, McCracken £3,000). Support has been given from the UoA budget to assist colleagues with seed funding for networking events to stimulate further major bids for the Wellcome Trust (Byrne) and the AHRC (White).

The Unit has collaborated with the University's Research Development (RD) team to help identify the most appropriate and prestigious funding opportunities and to develop large-scale, high-quality and multidisciplinary applications. Together with Research Development and Research Management, the team provides a continuous and effective pre- and post-award service to Ulster researchers. RD provides an open and competitive opportunity to secure seed funding and pump

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priming to identify and develop projects and bids through the RD Strategy fund and the Collaborative Research Fund. In addition, the Department for Research and Impact offers expert review services and PhD match funding to strengthen strategic, prestigious and interdisciplinary applications. It works with Global Engagement and Development and Alumni Relations to identify partnerships that will strengthen applications and leverage financial support. Colleagues also benefit from talks and mentorship provided by the RD team.

These interactions have generated **valuable interdisciplinary projects** with Belfast City Council, Causeway and Glens Council, Derry and Strabane District Council, Mid Ulster Council, The Maine Ulster-Scots Group, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, France, and University of Silesia, Poland.

PhD recruitment is aligned to research strategy with a growing focus on encouraging interdisciplinary links: **approximately 30% of our projects have interdisciplinary supervision teams**, including links with Communication and Media UoA 34, Education UoA 28, Language and Linguistics UoA 26 and Psychology UoA 4. We aim to involve all staff and work with external experts in advisory roles, including Visiting Lecturers and academics from other HEIs. The Unit has three full-time PhD studentships each year, which include tuition fees, stipend (currently £15,100 pa) and research training grant (currently £900 pa). These studentships are funded primarily from the Department for the Economy, and our Vice-Chancellor's Research Scholarship programme utilising the university's annual research budget. PhD research projects are proposed by supervisors and funded on a competitive basis with the RD considering the strategic fit of the research to our Unit and ensuring appropriate supervision is in place. Ferguson and Clarke [Education] have succeeded in attracting a Northern Bridge PhD scholarship focused on Ulster-Scots Education and the music of Sam Henry.

Planning is under way for the next five-year cycle, with financial and teaching relief assistance provided to support colleagues who have been earmarked to seek major research bids (Butler, Byrne, De Ornellas, Ferguson, Hancock, Keanie, Murphy, Ward, White). Preparation is ongoing to ensure that management of the research Unit is balanced in the coming years against increased funding targets and the personal development plans of colleagues within the Unit. As the RD post will come up for appointment in the next review period, the current RD will explore with the Associate Dean for Research, the HoS and other senior colleagues the best way **to maximise research creation alongside succession planning and inclusive team-driven management for the Unit.**

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

The Unit makes a strong contribution to the research base, economy and society through:

- maintenance of strong publication quality and quantity and project completion;
- working with a range of partners in government, education and creative industries; and
- commitment to civic engagement by widening access activities.

### Research networks and partnerships

One of the Unit's key aims in this cycle has been to **extend local, national and global collaborations, building on an already strong regional engagement**. All members of staff in the English Unit make a positive contribution to the discipline, through activities from the organisation of conferences and symposia to the establishment of national and international networks and partnerships.

- Ferguson, Jedrzejewski and White's research on the John Hewitt collection at the University makes **the literary heritage of the university's region more widely available through digital enhancement of local archives** relevant to Irish and Scottish studies and embeds this approach in the Unit's research objectives. The work has also provided a platform for cultivating national and international collaborative links.
- Ferguson has forged concrete links and joint research projects with the University of Glasgow, Queen's University Belfast, the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, the

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University of Silesia, Poland, and St Petersburg College, Florida, resulting in a conference series and several edited collections on Ulster-Scots writing.

- Ferguson's **noted work on Ulster-Scots language and literature continues** with membership of the Educational Sub-committee for the NI Executive's Ministerial Advisory Group on Ulster-Scots and the Language Forum for Ulster-Scots. He is a consultant for the Ulster-Scots Broadcast fund, the Seamus Heaney HomePlace and several television production companies. He has co-organised conferences, events and exhibitions which have explored Ulster-Scots and other minority cultures in a European context in Belfast, Coleraine, Paris, Katowice and Sosnowiec.
- The Unit's Ulster Poetry Project has developed a range of digital materials and works with the John Hewitt Society including an exhibition featured in the John Hewitt Society Spring School in Hillsborough in 2018.
- The Representation of the Jews in Irish Literature project has included exhibition launches and talks in Belfast, Dublin, Waterford, Galway and the American Conference of Irish Studies in Washington DC (2017). Partnerships with the Royal Irish Academy, NUI Galway and Irish Jewish Museum, Dublin have raised awareness of the significance of Jews in Irish culture and been **recognised by the NI administration and the leadership of the Jewish faith in the United Kingdom**.

## Collaborations with key research audiences

Scholars within the Unit are active in academic conferences and symposia to further dissemination of their research and have presented more than 50 papers between 2014 and 2020.

The Unit is supported in its consultancy work by the **Innovation & Impact Team, which plays a critical role in the support and development of academics and enhances the Unit's impact culture**. The team supports with horizon scanning; developing partnerships; supporting industry engagement; public engagement opportunities; developing impact strategies; training and support; impact seed funding; and marketing and communications.

## Consultancy

Over the last REF cycle, **100% of colleagues have provided consultancy and advisory roles** in a range of disciplines. All staff either sit on review boards of presses and journals or offer consultancy to local government and cultural bodies.

Some notable instances of consultancy are as follows:

- Bradford acted as an adviser for the BBC programme *Through the Lens of Larkin* (2017) which was inspired by his monograph *The Importance of Elsewhere*. He was the main adviser for several events during Hull's City of Culture year (2017) and served as adviser for three major trade publishers (Constable and Robinson; Bloomsbury; and Biteback) on their general policies and commissioning strategies regarding biographies. He is a regular contributor to television and radio programmes as well as an essayist for newspapers and magazines.
- Along with Ferguson, Bradford, Murphy and White have been recognised over the past two cycles as the **main generators of impact** in the Unit.
- Byrne provides consultancy to the UK press on *Downton Abbey* and other period dramas. Her work has been recognised by an approach to contribute to the *Oxford Bibliography Project*. De Ornellas is on the steering committee for the Irish Renaissance Society and his research into Renaissance and Early Modern drama has enabled him to play a role in the

local theatrical community, working for the university's Riverside Theatre as advisor and introducer.

- Ferguson sits on the advisory committee for the Seamus Heaney HomePlace, provides **expertise to NI Screen, Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund, television and radio production companies, the NI Executive, and the museums sector on Ulster-Scots issues**, and is the Honorary President of the Belfast Burns Association. He and White have acted as consultants on a number of television and radio productions in the last cycle.
- Ferguson is currently working with poet Gerald Dawe, DoubleBand productions and the Burns Library, Boston College, on the development of a documentary, exhibition and conference series based on the life and work of the poet.
- Jedrzejewski is the Vice-President of Lettres Européennes (since 2016), **a Europe-wide network of experts on European literature and culture**, and is co-editor of a new edition of *Lettres Européennes / History of European Literature*. He co-ordinates a team involving academics from Bangor University, University of Edinburgh, University of St Andrews, University of the Highlands and Islands, National University of Ireland Galway, University of Cyprus, Open University of Cyprus and Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.
- Jedrzejewski is a **member of the Royal Irish Academy's Study of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication Committee** (from 2018), and since 2019 has been a member of the AHRC Peer Review College. He is a reviewer for the Irish Research Council (from 2017), as was Ferguson (2017), and was external consultant for strategy development, University of Łódź, Poland (2019). He is a founding member of the Polish Association for Irish Studies (from 2019) and, with Ferguson, was instrumental in developing the institutional partnership with the University of Silesia. He has provided research mentorship for Professor Haider Al-Hussain (independent scholar, UAE), supporting his research on Thomas Hardy (from 2020).

### Guest lectures and keynote addresses

- Bradford was invited as keynote speaker on three occasions for the **Oxford Literary Festival, and has addressed Hay Festival and the Cheltenham Literary Festival**. He has been keynote speaker at two conferences at the University of Avignon as well as the Universities of St Andrews (Evaluation), York (Evaluation), Mainz (Evaluation), and Østfold, Norway (Evaluation). During the Hull City of Culture year (2017) he was invited to deliver two keynote addresses on the work of Philip Larkin. Byrne was invited as guest speaker to Northumbria University (2019).
- Jedrzejewski has spoken on 'Hiberno-Polish Literary and Cultural Relations from the Perspective of Northern Ireland' (Polish National Day, PRONI, Belfast, 2018), on 'Alternative Ascendancies: Anglo-Irish Identities in the Nineteenth Century' (Polish Association for the Study of English conference, University of Łódź, Poland, 2018) and on 'Poland's Paths to Independence: November 1918 in Historical Perspective' (Polish Independence Day, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Bangor, 2018). At the Salon du Livre de Paris, he joined a round-table discussion panel on European literature (2019). He delivered 'Literature and Politics in Modern Ireland: Independence and Division', 'Victorian Literature and Politics: Chartists, Reformers, and Imperialists', and 'Easier Said than Done: The Brexit Saga from the Perspective of Northern Ireland', as invited lectures at the Université Catholique de Lille, France (2020). In November 2020 he gave an invited talk on Northern Ireland at the Ulysses in the Times of Brexit conference, Polish Association for Irish Studies (online).
- McCracken has delivered a range of readings in the UK, Ireland and the USA in the last seven years, while White has spoken on the work of Margaret Atwood at the NI Human Rights Festival in 2018 and 2019.

**Academic Prestige Based on Research**

Members of the Unit have assisted in the quality management and examination processes for research degrees in the UK, Ireland and internationally.

- Bradford's Avignon Visiting Professorship, which has continued into this cycle has seen him sit twice on appointment committees for permanent academic posts and as the external examiner on doctoral examination boards three times at Avignon and once at Montpellier.
- Ferguson is a reviewer for doctoral applications to the AHRC's Northern Bridge Consortium and to the Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme.
- Jedrzejewski has examined PhD theses at the Université Catholique de Lille 3 (2017) and Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (2018) He received the **prestigious medal 'Universitatis Lodzensis Amico' from the University of Łódź** (2016).
- Ferguson's work on Ulster-Scots was recognised by Ulster University with a **Distinguished Research Fellowship Award** in 2014.

**Editorial Boards**

All members of the research Unit drive publication and outputs in their disciplines through their work as members of editorial boards in key presses and journals. They act as readers on editorial boards for significant academic presses and journals:

- Bradford (Wiley Blackwell, Routledge, Oxford University Press)
- Butler (Edinburgh University Press, *Crime Fiction Studies*)
- Byrne (Cambridge University Press, Edinburgh University Press, Routledge, *Social History of Medicine*, *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies*, *Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, *Journal of Popular Television*)
- De Ornellas (Routledge, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*)
- Hancock (*Modern Language Review Journal*)
- Jedrzejewski (Routledge, *Text Matters*, *Polish Journal of English Studies*, *Prace Literaturoznawcze*)
- Keanie (Greenwich Exchange, Edinburgh University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, *Studies in Romanticism and Romanticism*)
- McCracken (*Encyclopedia of Irish-American Relations*)
- Murphy (*Church History*, *Cather Review*)
- Ward (University of Delaware Press, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, *Irish Studies Review*, *English, Swift and his Contemporaries* book series)

**Civic Outreach**

The Unit has undertaken outreach activities that reflect the role of colleagues as discipline experts in local, national and international settings.

- Following the success of the first conference in the Guilty Pleasures series, Byrne hosted 'Guilty Pleasures 2: From Poldark to Partridge: masculinity and contemporary television.' This included Ulster colleagues and PhD researchers, as well as international scholars. Proceedings will be published in 2021.
- De Ornellas carries out engagement activities with University of the Third Age and delivers lectures to A-level students based on his research. Ferguson and Hancock manage lectures and workshops for A-level students on Heaney and Frost at the Seamus Heaney HomePlace (approximately 1,000 since 2017).



## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

- Ferguson has hosted and interviewed authors including James Kelman and Helen Vendler and at the HomePlace as part of its events programme.
- Ferguson, Hancock, and White provided **ongoing consultation on GCSE and GCE A-level English for NI's regulatory body**, the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).
- White was appointed CCEA Subject Advisory Panel member (English) in 2019. The panel provides a forum for CCEA to have discussions with subject teachers to support the development and delivery of CCEA **qualifications to ensure they continue to be of a high standard and meet the needs of stakeholders**.
- As a member of the CCEA panel, in June 2020 White took part in an online focus group, at subject level, to discuss possible ways to address speculative scenarios for the 2020/2021 academic year.

## Schools Outreach

- The Ulster-Scots Education Project delivered approximately 12 outreach events to schools across NI between 2012 and 2014.
- Colleagues in English, led by Jedrzejewski, revived their popular sixth-form conference in November 2019 with 300 pupils and teachers attending lectures and workshops on the Coleraine Campus. Ferguson and Ward visited schools to offer lectures to pupils who could not attend this event.
- Ferguson and Hancock worked with the Widening Access Department on a shared education project with local schools in 2019-20 that saw 200 pupils drawn from four schools take part in literacy and STEM-based workshops on the Coleraine campus.
- Hancock is an assessor of proposals / applications for NUI Travelling Studentship in the Humanities.
- Jedrzejewski has been organiser of the Robert Welch Public Lecture in Literature, UUC/UUB (from 2013), which has hosted speakers including Christoph Bode, Terence Brown, Ciaran Carson and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin.
- Ferguson and McCracken have gained funding from the British Council to appoint an International Writer in Residence to offer student and public workshops and readings.
- Ferguson and McCracken have partnered with the university's Widening Access Department and Seamus Heaney HomePlace to run a province-wide poetry competition aimed at Year 13 pupils. They have also received approval for funding from Widening Access (£1,000) to develop poetry workshop and associated activities for four secondary schools in NI at GCSE level.
- Ferguson, Hancock and Jedrzejewski, in association with Widening Access, have led the Unit in the development of an online learning platform open to A-level and GCSE pupils in NI.

## Literary Festivals

- McCracken partnered with the Institute for Conflict Research on a collaborative visual arts / poetry project as part of the Ards and North Down Peace IV programme and the Minority Ethnic and Cultural Awareness programme.

### Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

- She has worked with the visual artist John T. Davis to create a gallery exhibition of photographs and poems (*Mustangs*), which will be the main exhibition at John Hewitt Summer School in 2021 following the postponement of the 2020 festival. Her reputation has grown steadily in this period and she has been recognized on prize lists and given readings across Ireland and North America.
- Murphy has demonstrated her commitment to working with local and international partners and organised the programme of events at Stendhal Festival 2017, Willa Cather Symposium 2018 and John Steinbeck Conference 2019.
- Ward collaborated with the Belfast Metropolitan Arts Centre on Atheist NI talk series.
- White developed the Bann Beckett Project in association with Riverside Theatre (2016/17) and launched the Festivals Project: Beckett, Ireland and the Biographical Festival in partnership with Trish McTighe, Queen's University Belfast (2019).

### Subject leadership

- White serves as Vice-Chair and **the NI representative on University English (UE), the executive of the UK English subject association**. This is the key professional body consulted by funding bodies when gauging the views of the English subject community in the UK. UE has considerable influence in key areas of educational policy; for example, in partnership with the English Association, it provided a consultation response for REF2021 and a response to Plan S (Open Access publications). It also produced the Good Practice Guide for Employing Temporary Staff in English (agreed at the April 2018 AGM). White helped organise key meetings for representatives from English departments across the UK, including the panel at the 2017 OGM which **focused on supporting early-career academics**. This panel discussed pressures on early-career academics including the use of precarious (temporary / part-time) and teaching-only contracts. It sought answers to key questions including: What can English departments do to mitigate these pressures? What constitutes good practice in supporting these staff?
- At the UE 2019 OGM, White helped organise a panel on 'English A-level: Behind the headlines', which reviewed research on causes of the decline in the number of students sitting English A-level. She is also a judge for the annual Book Prize, awarded for the best scholarly book by an early-career academic working in an English department affiliated to UE. Ferguson and White contributed to the Arts Over Borders Festival 2018, in partnership with Sean Doran.
- Ferguson has an ongoing collaboration with poet Gerald Dawe and Burns Library Boston to develop an exhibition, documentary and conference series based on Dawe's work, biography and cultural interests. As part of this project, he has helped DoubleBand Productions to receive funding support from Future Screens NI.