

Institution: Aberystwyth University
Unit of Assessment: 27: English Language and Literature
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>Context</p> <p>The Department of English and Creative Writing (ECW) at Aberystwyth University (AU) is a small research and teaching unit delivering a broad range of scholarship that cuts across the categories of literary studies and creative writing. The size and scope of the research team has undergone considerable change since REF 2014. In response, a proactive decision was taken to modify the traditional period-based boundaries of research clustering that define most English departments, facilitating a more dynamic, inclusive, and cohesive focus on two thematic strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place and Belonging • Emotional Lives <p>These foci enable researchers to develop points of contact that not only traverse the restrictions of periodisation but also allow for enriching exchanges of ideas and methodologies across what otherwise risk remaining as critical/creative silos. In this way, we have ensured the vitality of our research while buttressing the sustainability of the research environment. ECW's smallness contributes to the achievement of a collaborative research environment in which co-owned strategy enables the unit to punch significantly above its collective weight.</p> <p>Research Strategy and Achievements</p> <p>Since 2014 ECW has implemented a Research Strategy designed to enrich the Department's activity in this area by promoting inclusive engagement, as articulated in the aims outlined in the REF 2014 statement. The strategy has been delivered in tandem with the University's Sustainability Implementation Plan and in response to systemic challenges described in REF5a and is informed by the University's new Research and Innovation Strategy. In particular, we have been guided by AU's core principles of encouraging ambitious research that challenges existing approaches and knowledge; creating a coherent research-led academic environment; enhancing inclusivity in research; and collaborating with external partners, in Wales and globally. We have not only fulfilled the strategic aims outlined in REF 2014, but have exceeded our own ambitions in key areas:</p> <p><u>Research Centres & Sustainable Research.</u> During the current assessment period, research centres previously established on the basis of period expertise have been redefined as two dynamic thematic strands. These actively promote interdisciplinarity and have proven effective in ensuring sustainability, although in a very different context to that envisaged by the authors of REF5 in 2014. These areas of research activity are comprehensively represented in the Department's REF 2021 returns and inform the unit's strategic development in preparation for the next iteration of the exercise. In turn, ECW researchers and thematic strands shape the work of the Interdisciplinary Research Centres established under the umbrella of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), generating interdisciplinary perspectives both within and beyond AU.</p> <p><u>Grant Capture and Collaboration.</u> Diminution in senior-level research experience and expertise at the beginning of the assessment period posed significant risk to ECW's aspirations in this area. However, strategic intervention (see 'Structure and Research Management') enabled researchers to maintain momentum and meet this challenging aim. ECW's research income for the period 2013-2020 totalled £598,000 (10.69 FTE), compared with £422,724 (14 FTE) in the REF 2014 census period. This increase in annualised income generation of 28.5% per FTE was achieved as a result of ECW's strategic emphasis on building the capacity and experience of early and mid-career researchers. The success of this strategy is further evidenced in the sustained increase in grant capture activity. Applications have developed from key activity taking place within our over-arching thematic strands. Examples include projects than speak to medical</p>

humanities focused on pain, sleep, and well-being (Goodwin, **Yallop**), climate literacy (**Alexander**), and biometrics (**Marggraf Turley**). To put this increase into context, in the twelve months prior to the end of the current assessment period ECW researchers submitted new funding applications totalling £1,028,041 (£96,168 per FTE). This 70% increase on the preceding twelve-month period demonstrates a pattern of sustained strategy-led growth that evidences the achievability of our aims to 2024 (see 'Strategic Aims').

Wales and Wales-related Research. ECW has successfully established a core research focus on Wales-related topics/projects and for several years has made a significant contribution to the broader aims of AU in this area. Our firm commitment to the AHRC South West and Wales DTP, ECW's extensive profile in Wales-related research, and our close proximity to and collaborative engagement with the National Library of Wales have enabled the consolidation of recruitment and the development of an interconnected, cross-disciplinary research community with the critical mass to deliver a substantial volume of new knowledge to this field. ECW has an exceptionally strong cluster of PGR students working on Wales-related projects. High-profile public-facing events (such as 'Writing Welsh Identities' 2018) showcase this research activity, demonstrating the relevance of ECW's work to local, regional, and national communities.

Research Students & Community. ECW hosts a PGR cohort of 30.5 FTE and strong recruitment of PGR students from an international and home/EU pool has continued throughout the assessment period (23 new registrations, of which 30% were international). ECW researchers are currently supervising 4 AHRC DTP and DTP2 students, both in host and collaborative academic-partner roles. As noted in 'Wales and Wales-related Research', we have built a significant community of PGR researchers working on Wales-related projects. In addition to this distinct cohort, recruitment of high-quality PGR students has also been enhanced by success in securing KESS-funded projects, working with diverse knowledge exchange partners such as the National Library of Wales and GeoSho (geo-mapping app development).

Beyond the scope of the 2014 strategy, a significant accomplishment since REF 2014 is ECW's success in achieving sustainability and research growth, this against a backdrop of shifting environmental and economic priorities in the Institution as a whole. Manoeuvring through significant challenges, ECW has successfully redefined its research context so that researchers at all stages of their careers are enabled to develop both their individual profiles and their wider contribution to the strategic success of a small, tight-knit, vibrant research community.

Impact Strategy and Achievements

ECW has seen through a process of rich culture change and increased vitality in relation to the impact agenda. Strategic aims for impact that were barely nascent in 2014 have been developed and refined over the period of the current REF cycle. Broadly, the aims described in REF 2014 3a focused on:

1. Collaborative and interdisciplinary research to maximise impact
2. Planning for Impact
3. An embedded impact culture from PGR to the professoriate
4. Communication strategies to promote and propel impact.

Building on these aims since 2014, we have responded to the development of AU's Strategic Plan and the core institutional objective of securing world-leading research *with* impact. ECW has increased its research impact by addressing both conceptual and practical barriers. All researchers engage with ongoing CPD focused specifically on impact which has strengthened our ability to identify pathways to impact and embed impact into research activity at the design stage. As a result, our reshaped strategic aims are significantly more ambitious, and structured around the recognition of impact as an inherent component of day-to-day research activities. ECW researchers engage fully in contemporary societal challenges, contributing to the development of scholarly agendas as well as to research that directly benefits communities, society, and the economy in Wales and beyond, including, for instance, responses to Welsh Government smart specialisation priority areas in low-carbon, energy and environment

(**Alexander, Harris**); life sciences and health (**Marggraf Turley, Yallop**); and the digital economy (**Jarvis**).

To deliver the impact strategy, ECW has leveraged various University support mechanisms (see REF5a). Of particular import since 2018, internal AU competitive funding has been available to support the design and delivery of high-quality impact. ECW has made extensive use of this initiative and all staff are encouraged to identify impact activity as part of a rolling-REF strategy; £4361 has been awarded to date (**Marggraf Turley, Yallop**). This practical support enables impact by recognising and ameliorating the resource implications of ECW's proactive strategy. Furthermore, impact activity is managed at a local level through workload allocation, ensuring that sufficient time is prioritised for researchers actively developing impact.

As a result of these initiatives ECW produced four viable case studies over the current cycle. In consultation with our designated Research Impact Officer, 'Historical Literature / Contemporary Debates' and 'Sustainable Utopias' were selected as priorities for submission. Taken together these case studies illustrate ECW's approach to achieving impact emerging from our sustained thematic focus. Public engagement activity is central to our ethos and methodology, enhanced by active and ongoing collaborations with beneficiaries and stakeholders that result in sustainable and transformative change. Both case studies bring into direct contact critical and creative approaches that recognise and demonstrate the value of knowledge exchange to the creative economy and the shaping of creative practice. Building on this public engagement approach to impact, ECW's ongoing and future external-facing activities will seek to deepen and extend our existing interventions in public policy generation.

Structure and Research Management

Changes to ECW's research context in 2014 gave rise to important opportunities to review our structure and research management with the aim of ensuring sustainability and vitality within the unit. Research management within the unit is led by the Head of Department and Director of Research with staff representation across all career stages and profiles via the Research Environment Group (REG, chaired by the DoR). At Faculty-level the DoR is a member of FASS Research Committee, representing the unit and acting as conduit for the bi-directional flow of strategic development. In addition, the Associate Dean for Research and Senior Research Development Lead both play a role in acting as critical friend for ECW researchers. These support roles ensure all staff have appropriate access to the wider landscape of FASS research and a clear understanding of how their research activity intersects with broader priorities, including identifying opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

At local level, the structure of ECW's research environment has been re-envisioned in order to maximise the potential for collaborative working between researchers, to capitalise on research strengths and identify strategic priorities. The framework of thematic strands enriches the vitality of the Department's research, promoting cohesion and collective purpose within the research team, establishing points of contact between researchers and acting as a mechanism for the effective communication of ECW's research priorities to internal and external audiences. The strands have generated a wide range of synergies (outlined below) that have promoted creative and innovative thinking resulting in exciting new research directions. By regularly reviewing these thematic strands as part of ECW's established pattern of Research Away Day events researchers ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose and reflect the research directions and ambitions of the team:

Place and Belonging

This strand emerged from and builds on the Leverhulme-funded *Devolved Voices* project (**Barry, Jarvis**) and significant growth in research activity and international visibility, particularly in the area of Welsh Writing in English. This activity includes literary production in contemporary poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction (**Francis, Goodwin, Matthews, Nolan, Yallop**) as well as critical analysis, collaboration with relevant external stakeholders, and interdisciplinary enquiry (**Alexander, Barry, Jarvis**). Since 2016 ECW has hosted the *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, contributing to the dissemination of world-leading research in this field. In

addition, ECW funds the annual international conference of the Association of Welsh Writing in English. The Department is also a co-organiser of the annual Keats Foundation International John Keats Conference, which in 2018 produced an innovative collection of essays on poetry and place (**Marggraf Turley**, see REF 2). Synergies have emerged across the diverse ways in which literature and writing emerge out of/sits within real and imagined locations and raises questions of belonging (**Alexander, Francis, Marggraf Turley, Nolan, Yallop**). Such questions are understood variously in terms of memory, geographical rootedness/rootlessness, and real or imagined communities, including communities of interest and expertise, age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity (**Alden, Alexander, Francis, Grice, Harris, Jarvis, Urban, Yallop**).

Emotional Lives

This strand showcases innovation in areas pertaining to points of contact between STEM/Social Sciences and diverse areas of critical and creative enquiry: literary history, textual production, memory studies, gender studies, life writing, and translation (**Alden, Rodgers, Thurston, Yallop**). Synergies have emerged across critical and creative responses to an array of issues connected with inner and private lives, as well as the crossover between inner lives and the public sphere. Our sense of private and personal space, and the psychoanalytic theories and interpretations that underpin such readings (**Alden, Grice, Rodgers, Thurston, Urban, Yallop**), has prompted significant work examining the relationship between health, pain, and creativity (**Yallop, Vernon**). This thematic focus has been particularly successful in generating opportunities for dynamic public engagement and pathways to impact underpinned by diverse research activity: communicating physical and psychological pain (Goodwin, **Thurston, Yallop**); sustainable communities (**Alden, Alexander, Harris, Jarvis**); agricultural, economic, and future security (**Marggraf Turley, Nolan**).

The success of this framework is evidenced by ECW's considerable productivity in research activity both within and beyond the scope of REF. Notably, the REF Reading Committee (RRC) reviewed a long-list of 68 outputs, of which an impressive 25% were book-length projects. Taken together, this 'hybrid' body of outputs exemplifies ECW's commitment to activating research through an inclusive environment that rethinks artificial boundaries.

Open Access & Research Integrity

ECW is committed to maintaining the highest standards of research integrity and ethics, embedding transparency and openness in all aspects of departmental research culture, as well as providing clear guidance to colleagues about honesty, conduct, and collegiality. This guidance is delivered through REG, online diversity and unconscious bias training, one-to-one mentoring, CPD courses in PhD viva chairing and examining, and through regular Research Away Days. In order to support commitments to the open access agenda ECW engages fully with AU initiatives including the institutional repository. Researchers are supported in pursuing appropriate publisher agreements; in addition, discretionary funding is made available to meet publication fees. ECW researchers are also directly engaged in developing policy and extending open access availability as editors of open access and hybrid journals. For example, in 2017 the lead and associate editors of the *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English* (**Alexander, Jarvis**) oversaw the journal's transition to a fully open-access publication. By fostering an innovative partnership between the Open Library of Humanities and University of Wales Press, the editorial team have ensured the sustainability of the publication whilst significantly expanding its reach and impact factor. All researchers, including PGRs, receive training on the importance of open research, open access, and research data management. Ethical approval is sought via established AU systems to ensure all research activity meets the highest ethical and professional standards irrespective of whether this includes human participants, sensitive topics, or personal data.

Strategic Aims

ECW's strategic aims over the next REF cycle reflect and are informed by AU's 2019-2024 Research and Innovation Strategy. ECW makes rich contributions to consolidating the centrality of research, impact, and innovation to the University's mission and will:

- Identify and facilitate ambitious, entrepreneurial research that challenges existing approaches and knowledge by building on our revitalised approach to resourcing the bid-writing process and establishing wider opportunities for targeted research leave geared towards grant applications and impact activity.
- Establish proactive strategies that enable researchers to address and overcome the disruptive impact of Covid-19 during the 2019-24 period.
- Sustain excellence in a coherent research-led academic environment, in which research informs teaching and research activity is an integral part of the curriculum with students at all levels acting as the producers of knowledge.
- Ensure inclusivity in all areas of research activity by monitoring and facilitating diversity across teams, making sure that the full range and variety of voices and experience inform strategic directions, and by providing meaningful support to enable early career researcher (ECR) activity, focusing on parity of access to financial and career development infrastructure.
- Expand collaborative partnerships, generating research that addresses global challenges responding to Welsh Government priorities and global issues.
- Build on our expertise in illuminating the cultural and social value and currency of past, present, and future literatures and communicating that knowledge to existing and new beneficiaries.

Our overarching aim from 2021 is to promote the valency of our research to diverse public audiences and the centrality of our creative and critical practice to the advancement of knowledge and the enrichment of cultural life. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic the urgency of this objective has been laid bare and we are confident our nurturing and collaborative research environment will ensure the delivery of these aims over the next REF period.

2. People

Staffing Strategy and Staff Development

Seizing on opportunities to reshape and re-infect, we have achieved research sustainability and growth through proactive interventions such as the strategic consolidation and refocusing of research-active staff on two thematic strands, as described above. Our staffing strategy is pivoted towards supporting and developing ECR experience across the whole range of research activity and, as a result, ECW's research environment has successfully underpinned an impressively energetic level of research activity, with high-quality publications and interventions throughout the reporting period.

Two research-active appointments have been made since 2014, both ECRs. These appointments fulfil strategic imperatives driven by ECW's research profile, and are part of a broader strategy aimed at establishing a research unit that challenges the perceived divide between creative and critical practice. With a concentrated cohort of research-active staff and a profile more weighted towards ECRs, the emphasis of staff development and research support in ECW is focused on maintaining vitality by delivering on research time allocation and enhancing sustainability through building individual and collective research capacity. Specific policies and mechanisms include institutional drivers outlined in REF5a augmented with the following unit-level interventions:

Research Leave – All researchers are entitled to apply for one semester of research leave every four years. During the assessment period the unit has delivered 6 years of dedicated research time (c.6.7 months per FTE). To supplement this capacity ECW has designed flexible opportunities that include short periods of teaching relief for specific, strategic activity (principally

bid writing and impact development), further supplemented with institutional initiatives such as Impact Development and Impact Acceleration schemes. Opportunities for research leave are also extended to members of staff transitioning from T&S to T&R contracts. In all cases research leave is a transparent process, based on an eligibility rota and annual application window. Applicants are supported through the process by the DoR and REG, and where necessary mentored through an iterative procedure of revision and resubmission. Strategic intervention has enabled ECW to ensure that all researchers have capacity to develop, design, and execute high-impact world-leading research.

Formal and informal Mentoring – Mentoring within ECW is organised horizontally rather than hierarchically, with mentors identified according to expertise in the area of focus (such as public engagement, publication, editing, impact, grant capture etc). This approach enables staff to access tailored collegial support relevant to their planned research activity. Augmenting this, ECR colleagues enter a formal research mentoring relationship with an experienced member of staff with responsibility for advising on strategic priorities such as grant capture, network building, project design and implementation. Mentoring is also available to staff via University initiatives and senior members of the team are supported by FASS colleagues, including FADR and SRDL.

Inclusive Development – The small size of ECW allows the unit to meet regularly to discuss strategy and developments, ensuring that all members of the Department take ownership and are directly involved in identifying strategic priorities. This inclusive approach to capturing all voices in the development of departmental strategy is further enhanced by ECW's approach to institutional procedures for appraisal and workload management (see REF5a). All staff meet annually with a senior member of the Department to appraise their contribution. Effective Contribution reviews are designed to enable reflection on performance against a range of criteria including strategic objectives and through this mechanism individuals contribute directly to the development and evaluation of strategic directions.

Supporting Early Career Researchers

Supporting the development of ECRs is a central component of ECW's research strategy and key to our success in ensuring the sustainability of the Department's research. The Research and Innovation Strategy commits AU to providing staff development opportunities for all research staff, including those on fixed-term contracts. ECW's additional mechanisms are designed to support ECRs in the delivery of high-quality research outcomes:

The **Research Environment Group (REG)**, chaired by the DoR, was established in 2014 and leads on strategic initiatives designed to promote an effective, collaborative, supportive, and inclusive research environment which is accessible to all members of the Department irrespective of career-stage or status. The direct involvement of ECRs as members of REG is core to the composition of the group and ensures that issues specifically affecting ECR colleagues are addressed at a strategic level.

The **ECR Champion** role coordinates activity specifically designed to support ECR colleagues. This ranges from the dissemination of ECR-focused funding calls and opportunities for internal and external training, to the Champion's mentoring role in supporting ECRs to navigate processes and advocating for ECR-focused policy initiatives.

Collaborative activities provide researchers with opportunities to showcase and receive feedback on work-in-progress. This is applicable to all staff but illustrates one of the ways in which needs identified by ECR colleagues have been addressed. Similarly, coordinated 'switch off and write' sessions promoting the prioritisation of research activity constitute a regular feature of term-time activity.

Regular **Research Away Days** include a standing item providing ECR colleagues with an opportunity to discuss their research activity and invites discussion of any ECR-specific issues.

Focused investment in ECR development has delivered key, high-quality results during this assessment period (22% of ECW's returned outputs are authored by ECRs) and will enable ECW to meet future targets for growing research income and expanding new areas of impact.

Supporting PGR students

ECW has a vibrant and international cohort of PGR students engaged in research at the forefront of developments in creative and critical practice. Over the assessment period annualised PhD awards have risen by 43% (to 55 FTE, compared to 27.5 FTE in REF 2014). Projects are carefully tied to ECW's research activity and the thematic strands, 'Place and Belonging' and 'Emotional Lives'. PGR students are supported across all stages of their programmes from application and the development of a research proposal through to submission, career management, and professional development. ECW's successful research culture, track record, recruitment and completion rate are reflected in our success in securing the award of four AHRC DTP and DTP2 studentships and one AHRC open competition studentship since 2014. In addition to institutional procedures pertaining to the support of Research students (such as annual monitoring, effective supervision, and research training; see REF5a) ECW PGRs benefit from a range of support activities and initiatives which contribute to successful and timely completion as well as career development:

- ECW's PGR students benefit from a flexible approach to the **supervisory team** that allows for discrete expertise from outside the designated team to be brought to bear. All ECW staff, including ECRs, have undertaken PGR supervision during the assessment period and students benefit from this breadth of expertise and diversity of experience. Students funded by the AHRC DTP/DTP2 have a co-supervisory team drawn from staff across two institutions from within the consortium; those hosted by ECW also benefit from our flexible model. In line with the wider departmental research ethos, Creative Writing projects are typically supervised by researchers with both creative and critical expertise, thus ensuring that students' formative research career experiences are bi-directional. Creative practitioners are encouraged to work simultaneously on the creative and critical elements of their projects and in this way the resulting theses demonstrate rigorous interventions in both fields of practice.
- All full-time PGR students participate in AU's **Research Training Programme** (see REF5a) to which c.3-4 ECW researchers directly contribute their expertise each academic session. Students are assisted in selecting appropriate research training modules by the Department's Director of Postgraduate Studies (DirPGS) who has oversight in terms of admissions, progression, and development. Supervisors engage directly with assessing their supervisee's research training assignments and as such are informed throughout the process of their students' development, ensuring any weaknesses in performance are quickly identified and addressed in consultation with the DirPGS.
- Access to the ECR support structures described above and to the wider AU **Continuing Professional Development** programme are made equitably available to all PGR students. Therefore, in addition to AU's Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University programme (TPAU), ECW PGRs have access to a broad variety of resource designed to support development on both academic and non-academic career tracks. Central to this is the PG Tutor Coordinator (PGTC), responsible for inducting and supporting all PGR students engaged in teaching activity. The PGTC works alongside the ECR champion to ensure strategic alignment is achieved in these intersecting areas of activity, in particular ensuring that an appropriate balance is struck between acquiring teaching experience and delivering research outcomes. This work is further supported by ECW's Employability Coordinator who ensures provision of research-facing employability

activity (such as editorial placements with *New Welsh Review* and the *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*).

- The **PGR Community** within ECW is carefully fostered and benefits from inclusion in the overarching thematic research strands that shape the Department's research priorities. PGRs are active participants in the regular Staff/Student Research Seminar Series, providing opportunities to present their research findings in a professional, supportive, and critically engaged environment. PGR students working in relevant fields are members of the Centre for Contemporary Poetry (CONTEMPO), an inter-institutional centre which provides regular opportunities for networking and dissemination. All PGR students have access to discretionary funds designed to enable external activity that further contributes to the research vitality of the Department. Students regularly present work at key academic conferences and public-facing events and their work has attracted recognition in the form of national literary and academic prizes (M Wynn Thomas Prize, 2015; Melita Hume Prize, 2015; Harry Ransom Center Dissertation Fellowship (2017); Forward Prize (shortlist) 2017).

Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

ECW is committed to building an inclusive research environment that is reflected in recruitment, promotion, and staff development policies; opportunities and support for research; research monitoring and REF selection; postgraduate recruitment and supervision; and impact and engagement activities. For its size, location and subject norms, ECW is a diverse unit formed from a range of identities and intersecting experiences. Amongst staff 32% identify as female and contribute 29.6% of outputs returned to REF 2021; 27.8% register a disability and contribute 29.6% of outputs returned. Amongst PGR students 38.9% identify as male and 22.2% are international.

The Department has adopted several policies and procedures to enable inclusive engagement in research. It operates a transparent framework for research leave; applications are considered by a FASS panel in a supportive, quality-focused and 'stretching' rather than gate-keeping process. The Department enables flexible working and is responsive to the needs of the significant proportion of staff (38%) employed on part-time contracts with workloads carefully monitored to ensure equivalence in research-facing activity with full-time staff. ECW promotes, supports, and augments AU's bilingual research environment, actively engaging in the development of Welsh language proficiency with researchers who wish to upskill to professional standards proficiency. All staff are able to converse at Language Level A1 or above. Within ECW, equality and diversity issues are promoted by a designated Equality Champion who contributes to the work of the AU Equality Champions Network, including recent activity in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement, and monitoring equalities consequences arising from AU's response to the pandemic. The prevailing conditions associated with Covid-19 have brought to the fore issues around caring responsibilities within the academic unit and the impact that such responsibilities have, particularly during a sustained period of crisis. Adjustments (flexible working, accelerated and/or adjusted research leave cycles) are in place to ensure the stability and continued vitality of research activity both during and beyond the pandemic.

ECW's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion extends beyond the general principles and accolades outlined in REF5a. In addition to mandatory Equality and Diversity Training, ECW researchers are active members of a broad range of research-support networks including the Women in Research Network, LGBT Network, and Disability and Wellbeing Network. Staff are mentors or mentees via the Female Academic Mentoring Programme, and ECW researchers are key contributors to externally facing diversity knowledge exchange activities such as our work with Gorwel (Welsh Foundation for Innovation in Public Affairs) on '50 years since the Sexual Offences Act', and *Aberration*, an annual Arts Council funded LGBT+ event organised in partnership with Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

Principles of equality and inclusion were rigorously incorporated into the REF 2021 selection process, as outlined in the University's Code of Practice. All members of the ECW RRC

completed and refreshed unconscious bias training. All outputs were reviewed by a minimum of two members of the RRC who provided independent assessments; where disagreements arose a third assessor was assigned. The process was conducted with complete transparency and all staff have been afforded opportunities to review and comment on the outcomes of the process. The operation of the RRC was observed by an independent member to monitor fair and equitable practice. Applications for output reductions for Individual Staff Circumstances were assessed through an anonymous process, with decisions made outside ECW.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Research Income

Research income to ECW in the assessment period totalled £598,000, representing an annualised uplift on REF 2014 equivalent to 28.5% per FTE (see 'Grant Capture and Collaboration'). Income was received from a range of sources, including UKRI awards, charitable organisations, consultancy activity, and internal seed-corn initiatives. Research income in the early part of the assessment period included two large grants obtained at the end of the REF 2014 period:

- 2012-2015: Barry and **Jarvis**, Leverhulme Project Award 'Devolved Voices: Welsh poetry in English Since 1997' (£232,042)
- 2013-2017: Salter, EU COST Action award [Action IS1301] 'New Communities of Interpretation: Contexts, Processes, and Strategies of Religious Transformation in Medieval & Early Modern Europe' (€500,000)

There have been notable successes in AHRC grant capture (**Alexander, Marggraf Turley, Woods**) and smaller successes via non-BEIS sources including UK charities and international funders (**Alexander, Hutton, Marggraf Turley**). Since 2017 we have made substantial and sustained progress towards rebuilding, revitalising, and restoring the grant-capture potential of the research unit. In particular, the Department has established extensive collaborative relationships both with external institutions and interdisciplinary clusters within AU. These collaborations, along with strategic development in this area, are fuelling a growth in applications, from small networking grants to multiple-partner projects. Following staff changes in the restructuring of the Department, with the staff cohort now oriented more towards ECRs, ECW has reset its strategy for research grant capture with an initial emphasis on building sustainable capacity by targeting small grants, fellowships, and pilot awards that have enabled staff to accumulate experience, test ideas, and increase opportunities for collaboration and research impact. Awards received include:

- 2014 **Marggraf Turley**, 'Edible Wales: Sustenance and locality' AHRC-A4B/CEWN (£4089)
- 2014 Chadwick, 'Investigating the Mostyn Library, c.1100-1900', Strategic Insight Programme (£2500)
- 2014 Salter, 'Scoping the Archival Collections of the Trawscoed Estate c.1180-present' Strategic Insight Programme (£2500)
- 2015 **Marggraf Turley**, 'The Quantified Romantics: Arts and Biometrics' AHRC (£2002)
- 2014-2019 **Thurston**, translation of *The Unfinished Copernican Revolution* Foundation Jean Laplanche (€30,000)
- 2019 **Yallop**, 'Writing Pain', AHRC funded Collaborative Doctoral Award (£67359)
- 2019-2020 **Yallop**, University Impact Leave (£3234)

- 2019-2020 **Marggraf Turley**, University Impact Leave (£1126)
- 2019-2020 **Harris & Alexander**, 'Welsh writing and nuclear power' AU URF (£1320)
- 2019-2020 **Alden**, 'Rethinking flight, persecution and war' URF (£1520)

Alongside this approach, collective capacity for research grant capture has been enhanced through strategic actions including annual departmental research away days; individual Personal Research Plans reviewed through the Effective Contribution process; synergy of staff research activities in the thematic strands; participation in scoping and expertise-sharing events organised by AU's Department of Research, Business and Innovation including, research cafes, sandpits and 'Grants Factory' workshops; and organisational infrastructure established by FASS since 2018, which has a particular emphasis on fostering collaboration and interdisciplinary engagement (see 'Infrastructure and Facilities'). Support for the development of individual grant applications is provided by a Research Development Officer assigned to the Department, with quality-enhancing processes including internal peer review of all proposals.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion in access to research grant income is addressed through targeted measures including, an annual sandpit event for ECRs to support the development of projects, and the opportunity for ECRs to apply for ringfenced University pump-priming funds, and Faculty 'women doing research' workshops. At a local level all staff are enabled to participate in grant income activity via a collaborative approach that supports junior colleagues, and a recognition of the need to facilitate and seed such activity by flexing resources to fit strategic priorities.

As noted in 'Grant Capture and Collaboration', these measures have contributed to significant year-on-year increases in the number and value of research grant applications submitted over the course of the cycle. Researchers are awaiting announcements on diverse applications including, British Academy Conference Award, AHRC Network Grant, and Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship. This activity (completed during the assessment period) will underpin early research priorities during the next cycle.

Infrastructure and Facilities

ECW engages fully with AU's research infrastructure strategy with its tripartite focus on unit-level, institutional, and inter-institutional facilities (see REF5a). The organisational infrastructure to support research and impact activities in ECW was strengthened by the formation of FASS in 2018. The critical mass realised by FASS and its designated responsibility for research coordination and leadership in the AU Research and Innovation Strategy (see REF5a) have enabled it to establish infrastructure that supports research and research impact that is interdisciplinary in focus. This infrastructure includes:

- Senior Research Development Leads with a remit to stimulate collaborative interdisciplinary research activities and provide mentoring for grant applications;
- A Concordat Lead to equip individual ECRs with the appropriate skills and aspirations to become confident and effective researchers;
- An Impact Group to encourage uptake of impact opportunities;
- Monthly 'women doing research' workshops which has covered issues on international research, mentoring, leadership, and the REF.
- Interdisciplinary Research Centres including the Centre for the Movement of People (CMOP) into which ECW's research themes feed, both contributing to the advancement of the agenda of each Centre and benefiting from their trans-disciplinary foci.

Members of staff in ECW (**Alexander, Jarvis, Yallop**) are also prominent in planning for a new FASS-led interdisciplinary programme 'The Lives We Want', as mentioned in REF5a, which will further enhance the organisational infrastructure and promote the vitality and sustainability of research in ECW in the next assessment period.

ECW research benefits from extensive local resources, including the University library which in addition to holdings supporting ongoing ECW research activity also houses specialist print collections (Horton's Children's Collection, Early Modern Rare Books Collection) relevant to specific areas of activity. At unit level, the Department houses its own small collection of specialist print materials with the specific aim of supporting research activity pertaining to our thematic strands and our work in Welsh Writing in English. AU provides researchers with access to general and subject-specific electronic information resources that provide further support across all creative/critical research strands and are augmented by staff and PGR student access to the online resources delivered via our affiliation with the National Library of Wales (NLW). ECW further benefits from AU's MoU with the NLW in that the institution is core to our research activity. As a UK copyright library, located adjacent to the university campus, with a long-standing knowledge exchange relationship with ECW, NLW provides researchers with access to extensive print, manuscript, and archival resources (particularly pertaining to Welsh literary culture) that enrich substantially AU's independent resource capacity. NLW is also an important venue for the dissemination of ECW research to public audiences: for example, the work of researchers affiliated with the David Jones Centre (**Thurston**) and the Centre for Contemporary Poetry (**Alexander, Francis, Goodwin, Jarvis, Matthews**).

The *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English* is hosted by ECW and is an important resource for PGRs who gain editorial experience working alongside the journal's team. ECW has a long-standing relationship with the literary magazine, *New Welsh Review*, which serves a similar function enabling PGRs and ECRs to gain valuable editorial experience. With support from FASS a similar arrangement is being developed with Honno (the Welsh Women's Press). Aberystwyth Arts Centre provides a valuable resource offering facilities for showcasing research activity, collaboration, and a public-facing venue at the heart of the University campus.

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

Collaborations

The work of ECW researchers takes place within a context of extensive and wide-ranging collaborations with academic and non-academic partners. Interdisciplinary engagement within AU includes contributions to the strategic priorities of centres such as CMOP and the Centre for Welsh Politics and Society (particularly the 'Placing Wales' strand) which share points of contact with our research themes. ECW hosts two centres, the David Jones Centre (**Thurston**) and CONTEMPO (**Alexander, Harris, Jarvis**) which support the work of researchers via national and international networks across universities (Brighton, Plymouth, Bangor, Surrey).

International networking has also been facilitated by a series of prestigious Visiting Fellowship awards at the Tanner Humanities Center, University of Utah (2016, Padget); the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Research Center, Santa Fe (2017, Padget); the Schlesinger Library, Harvard (2018, **Grice**); and a Hawthornden Fellowship (2015, **Francis**). Collaborations with UK and International academics have richly enhanced ECW's research environment and have resulted in significant collaborative publications across a range of fields. Established and ongoing partnerships include Roe (St. Andrews); Wootton (Durham); Rees (York); Easley (St. Thomas, Minnesota); Gill (St Andrews); Moruzi (Deakin, Australia); Smith (Monash, Australia); and Gleadle (Oxford).

The vitality of research in ECW is enriched by collaborations with industry, public, and civil society partners that inform our work and help to facilitate its wider impact. During the reporting period ECW has strengthened existing collaborative relationships with partners from a range of stakeholder groups. ECW's overarching strategy for establishing and sustaining such partnerships is driven via the thematic strands. Responding to these themes researchers have

established new collaborations and strengthened existing partnerships with the explicit aim of supporting sustainability and extending the reach and relevance of our research within the public domain.

Place and Belonging

By building a strong profile of research activity focused on place and identity ECW has positioned itself as a key partner in policy development in key strategic areas. Collaborations with Literature Wales are long-standing and extensive and recently resulted in the development of culturally significant research projects such as 'Wales During Covid-19', which assesses and analyses public access to literature in Wales during the pandemic (**Jarvis**). Collaboration with NLW, the National Museum of Wales and RCAHMW has resulted in the development of an ambitious cross-disciplinary project (c.£3m) 'Towards a National Collection' designed to develop geospatial interoperability between Welsh digital collections (**Jarvis**). Through these collaborations ECW researchers are leading on significant incursions into the Welsh Government's digital agenda, shaping and informing future policy and contributing to the Department's strategic ambition to diversify types of impact. New collaborations such as The Orkney-based Minervian Library Knowledge Exchange Network (**Rodgers**, 2017) in partnership with the Centre for Nordic Studies (**Rodgers**) promise productive future developments in Orcadian children's writing and the potential for international reach informing the preservation and presentation of archives of juvenile textual production. Extensive work alongside The Learned Society of Wales (ECW Fellows: Barry, **Francis**, Prescott) led to the commissioning of a comprehensive review into the health of 'Wales Studies', and a substantial report: **Jarvis**, *Uncovering Wales Studies: A Report on REF 2014 Impact Case Studies from Welsh HEIs* (2017). This work has been crucial to the development of the Society's Wales Studies agenda. Associated workshops facilitated by ECW researchers for drafters of the Curriculum for Wales 2020 ensured the centrality of the Welsh dimension to the final version of the curriculum, while illustrating the centrality of ECW's research in terms of informing Welsh Government education policy and shaping curricular developments across subject disciplines at a national level.

Emotional Lives

In parallel to the shaping of public policy, ECW's focus on inner and public lives has informed interventions into the wellbeing agenda. Extensive work on the intersections between art and language (**Alden**, **Thurston**, Vernon, **Yallop**) has led to collaborations with the Wellcome Collection, the National Gallery, National Museum of Wales and MOMA Wales and a range of engagement from public lectures and symposia to significant exhibitions. For example, in partnership with Museums Sheffield ECW (**Yallop**) seeded and contributed to a series of successful public projects as part of the Ruskin-in-Sheffield series of exhibitions (2016-2020), culminating in a public lecture and exhibition held at the National Gallery (London), 'Art for the Nation' (2019). Building on these collaborations, governance-level engagement with the Guild of St George, an arts educational and environmental charity, has enabled ECW researchers to provide the Guild with transformative leadership on effective liaison with Higher Education partners and the development of long-term collaborative projects. A new partnership with the Paris-based, Foundation Jean Laplanche (Institut de France) resulted in **Thurston's** commissioned translation of Jean Laplanche's *The Unfinished Copernican Revolution* (2020). This translation has the potential for significant impact, including beyond traditional English scholarship, with relevance to the domains of psychoanalysis and mental health. Innovative research into creative writing and pain (**Yallop**) has resulted in an active collaboration with Powys and Hywel Dda NHS Trusts (2017-2020). In turn, this partnership and the resulting activities have enabled the establishment of a wider collaboration with the Reading Centre for Cognition Research connecting this external network with the wider context of AU's interdisciplinary research activity via the ongoing 'Transformative Communities' project. As a result of this strategic focus on arts and health facing collaborations ECW is shaping key dialogues on the valency of our subjects to psychological, physical, and social wellbeing.

Contributions to Economy and Society

Throughout the reporting period ECW's research activity has engaged with a wide range of public beneficiaries ranging from local interest groups to national policy makers and international

audiences. Again, activity clusters around the thematic strands, allowing researchers to prioritise projects that are both sustainable and directly contribute to the vitality of the Department's research agenda.

Under the umbrella of Place and Belonging, ongoing work that started in 2016 is having a significant impact on the Wales Studies agenda via work with The Learned Society of Wales, particularly in terms of broadening the concept of Wales Studies beyond its traditional humanities domain, influencing ministerial policy makers and public stakeholders of education in Wales (Barry, **Jarvis**). Alongside this work of national policy significance, local events such as 'Writing Welsh Identities' (Hen Coleg, 2018) and the Old College Creative Writing Workshops series (2017-19) (**Francis, Yallop**) have engaged nationwide public audiences challenging existing perspectives, engaging with matters of cultural interest and raising public-awareness of University-wide activity and intersections in contemporary debate pertaining to identity politics and devolved voices. Further afield, collaboration with the UK Albanian Society resulted in high-profile public events such as the 2016 centenary celebration showcasing relevant literary historical research on national heroes to members of the public, invited European ambassadors, and Albanian national television audiences (Marshall).

New knowledge-exchange networks that inform and shape the work of researchers engaging in the thematic concerns of the Emotional Lives strand have generated outcomes for beneficiaries such as Public Health Cymru, Wales Arts Health and Care Research Alliance, and Literature Wales bringing the academic, public, and charity sectors together in investigating the intersections between physical health and individual and collective creativity (**Yallop**). Large-scale public-facing projects that have disseminated research to wide, non-academic audiences have enabled ECW to make considerable economic contributions to the UK arts sector. The Ruskin-in-Sheffield series of exhibitions (**Yallop**, 2016-2020) reached an audience in excess of 114,000 individuals and the associated 'Art for the Nation' lecture reached new audiences for both the material (Ruskin) and the venue (the National Gallery). The Romanticism and biometrics project (**Marggraf Turley**, see REF 2) reached physical audiences in excess of 6,000 through events at: the Being Human Festival (2015); the 2016 festival launch event 'Highlights of 2015' at Senate House; 'Living Frankenstein', Senate House (2018); Bath Literary Festival (2018) and two successive Aberystwyth Steampunk Festivals (2018, 2019).

Several ECW researchers have established high-value public profiles via expert contributions to widely disseminated media slots including: BBC Radio 4's 'Book of the Week'; BBC Radio Wales' 'Science Café' and 'Good Morning Wales'. ECW research also regularly features in global print media, including *Sunday Times*, *Daily Express*, the *Financial Times*, *Die Zeit*, *Der Spiegel*, *El Mundo*, *LA Times*, *National Geographic*, *Irish Times*, *Telegraph*, *Independent*, *Guardian*, *Sydney Herald*, *Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, as well as more specialist publications such as *Nature*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *Times Higher Education*, and *London Review of Books*. In addition to the economic contributions arising from our mainstream publishing activity, benefit to society in non-financial terms is a significant arm of our civic engagement. ECW researchers regularly engage with knowledge exchange projects, bringing new research on topical issues such as food security, biometrics, Medievalism, AI, and surveillance to public audiences and contributing to subject-specialist CPD for teachers (**Marggraf Turley, Nolan, Urban**). Community-focused public engagement is further evidenced in ECW's response to the Covid-19 pandemic which saw researchers engaging in outreach activity from March to July 2020 providing super-curricular material to enrich the experience of school-aged children on a broad range of topics drawn from our research such as workshops on climate change and disordered sleep (**Alexander, Harris, Vernon**).

Contributions to the Research Base and Discipline

ECW researchers have an outstanding track-record in wider contributions and activities that support the vitality and sustainability of the research base in English Language and Literature. Researchers engage with the dissemination of new ideas and works-in-progress via lectures and keynotes at international conferences within and beyond the UK: Harvard, Santa Cruz, Vechta,

Venn and visiting fellowships. Senior colleagues were regularly consulted on tenure, promotions and appointments to chairs in the UK and abroad (Cardiff University, Swansea University).

Over the review period extensive editorial work has been undertaken for diverse publishers and publications ranging from cutting-edge scholarship to general interest knowledge exchange. Examples of this work include: **Thurston's** *Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story* (Routledge, 2017); *May Sinclair's Collected Shorter Fiction* (forthcoming: Edinburgh University Press); *Barry's Extending Ecocriticism: Crisis Collaboration, and Challenges in the Environmental Humanities* (Manchester University Press, 2017); **Rodgers' Women, Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1830s-1900s** (Edinburgh University Press, 2019); **Francis's W.S. Graham: New Selected Poems** (Faber and Faber, 2018); and journal editing (e.g. *Journal of Art Historiography*, **Yallop**; *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, **Jarvis**; *Literary Geographies*, **Alexander**).

Aside from regular peer reviewing for subject journals, substantial contributions are made in terms of peer review on behalf of publishers including Cambridge University Press, Routledge, Palgrave, Rowman, University of Tulsa Press, University of Wales Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, and Peters Fraser and Dunlop.

Beyond these significant day-to-day contributions to scholarship, ECW researchers have instigated and enabled transformational change in the industry. In addition to enacting change in response to the open access agenda (described above), ECW researchers have been instrumental in working towards the sustainability of publications of national and international significance. For example, in 2019 the Chair of the literary magazine *Poetry Wales* (**Jarvis**) managed the publication through a serious crisis in subscriptions, successfully broadening the magazine's appeal and refocusing its editorial mission. Importantly, this intervention ensured that *Poetry Wales* established a sustained editorial strategy that targeted under-represented voices and communities from the Welsh literary scene. As a result, the magazine's reputation has been considerably restored, with subscriptions reaching Books Council of Wales targets, and BCW have adopted this crucial innovation into their own strategic agenda for diversity. As outlined above ECW researchers also make significant contributions to the research base via their activity in supporting the development of PGR students and ECRs. Within AU ECW has contributed extensively to the assessment and allocation of AU's annual PhD bursary awards (**Alexander**, 2019-present; **Marggraf Turley**, 2012-2018). In addition, senior staff (**Alexander**, **Francis**, **Marggraf Turley**, Marshall) are members of the SWW DTP College, and **Marggraf Turley** has delivered workshops and keynotes at Welsh Crucible (2013-2018) and UK Crucible (2018), as well as mentoring ECRs and delivering CPD on public engagement at UK HEIs more widely.